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**HEAVENLY MESSAGES AND THE PATH TO REDEMPTION:
AN EXAMINATION OF INSPIRED PROPHECY
IN MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND**

BY

**Gerald Lorentz
B.A., Wilfrid Laurier University, 1989**

**Thesis
Submitted to the Department of History
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
1991**

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ISBN © 315-68681-2

Acknowledgments

Both throughout the writing of this thesis and throughout my career at Laurier I have become indebted to a number of people. Although mere thanks can never repay what I owe, I would like to acknowledge these debts. Evelyn Jones, the ever-friendly and ever-patient history secretary deserves more recognition than she usually receives. She has certainly made my time at W.L.U. much easier. Dr. Suzanne Zeller offered much welcome support and encouragement. Dr. Kelly DeVries allowed me to bend his ear on a number of topics. As well, he provided both books and references which helped in the writing of this thesis.

My fellow M.A. students John Pierce, Dan Gallivan and Bill Taylor provided me with stimulating historical discussion and needed respites from my work. I also wish to thank Bill for his presence at my thesis defense, and Dan for his purposeful absence. I am grateful to Colin Varley for his long-distance support and continued friendship. To Allison Bain, Darcy Hall and Michelle Johnson I owe gratitude for a number of favours both large and small. Not the least on this list is their providing me with a home. As always my family offered their own variety of support and encouragement. In particular I wish acknowledge the contributions of my mother and my brothers Greg and Tom.

I want to thank my thesis board of Dr. D. Vaughn, Dr. Peter Erb, Dr. James Harkins, Dr. Douglas Lorimer and Dr. Joyce Lorimer for providing me with a glimpse of what lies ahead. To my thesis advisor Dr. Joyce Lorimer I owe a special debt. Her guidance over the years has provided me with whatever skills I have gained for the study of history. She has done her best to support my more insightful notions and to curb those ideas which were obvious dead-ends. The errors which remain in this thesis, either of fact or interpretation, remain entirely my own.

GFL

Wilfrid Laurier University
1991

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Introduction

In England, in late December 1648, a young female prophet named Elizabeth Poole (fl. 1648-1649) met with the General Council of the Army to discuss the fate of Charles I. Poole brought a message from God, and the council listened intently to this communication for over two hours. In the end they did not take the advice which Poole offered, but their careful consideration of her words indicates that they did take her seriously. Poole was not alone in her role as heavenly messenger. During the period of the Civil War and Interregnum such prophets were a common, if not an everyday, sight for many of her English contemporaries. In England the mid-seventeenth century saw the zenith of all forms of prophecy. People resorted to astrology to determine the best times to plant, travel, and transact business. The predictions of ancient seers were republished, and searched diligently for indications of the course of future events. People drew portents from the flights of birds, the shape of clouds, or unusual weather. Most important to this study is the large number of inspired prophets who spread throughout England declaring God's word. These messengers believed that they had been personally contacted by the divine mind, and that they had been given visions which they were required to impart to the nation. This thesis is an attempt to better understand the nature and role of this form of prophecy.

Poole, and other inspired prophets, have been considered as

part of the radical milieu of the 1640s and 1650s. By "radical" I mean here the Protestant sectarian churches in particular, although the term also includes those who increasingly stressed individualism either within or without of the sects. God's heralds appeared in large numbers in the mid-seventeenth century, and in many ways reflect the changing nature of the society from which they sprang. Historians have devoted a great deal of time to understanding both the radicals of this period, and the changing nature of English society, which saw a shift from a magical to a scientific understanding of the universe. Inspired prophets came through this transition as losers. While various radicals and radical groups have received increasing attention from historians, inspired prophets have largely been ignored. There is no comprehensive work on the prophets of this period, and knowledge of the role and nature of those who considered themselves God's messengers is incomplete.

Until very recently seventeenth century visionaries have been studied only as sidelines in larger works on millenarian ideas and radical groups. One of these studies is Norman Cohn's The Pursuit of the Millennium (1961). Millennial schemes involved the belief that the world would enjoy a thousand year period of peace and tranquility. This utopia was generally conceived to be brought in either by mythic figures, or by great leaders of the past. In his work Cohn examines the millenarianism of the Middle Ages, and sees the millennial fervour of the period as a constant aspect of thought throughout

the Middle Ages. These ideas persisted well into the seventeenth century.¹ Although his work deals mainly with medieval continental European views, he includes a section on seventeenth century English Ranters to illustrate the ideas of the "Free Spirit" which were prevalent in the Middle Ages.² He views the inspired prophets of the medieval period as victims of hallucinations caused by fasting and sexual tension.³

Discussion of English millenarianism in the seventeenth century had to wait until the publication of P. G. Rogers' The Fifth Monarchy Men (1966) and Bernard Capp's The Fifth Monarchy Men; a Study of Seventeenth Century Millenarians (1971).⁴ The Fifth Monarchists were a loosely formed millenarian group which developed in the 1650s mainly from London Baptist congregations. Rogers views them as radicals. Roger's belief stems from the idea that the Fifth Monarchists expressed old, and not new, political ideas.⁵ They were radicals because they were so far

¹ Norman Cohn The Pursuit of the Millennium; Revolutionary Millenarianism and Mystical Anarchism of the Middle Ages (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), passim.

² Ibid., pp. 287-294.

³ Ibid., pp. 183, 284, 287-294.

⁴ P. G. Rogers' The Fifth Monarchy Men (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966); Bernard Capp The Fifth Monarchy Men; a Study in Seventeenth Century Millenarianism (Totowa N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1971).

⁵ Rogers is reacting to Alfred Cohen's 1964 article, "The Fifth Monarchy Mind: Mary Cary and the Origins of Totalitarianism." Social Research (1964), pp. 195-213. Cohen discussed Fifth Monarchist ideology as the forerunner to modern totalitarian thinking.

out of step with the times in which they lived. Their ideas had them swimming against the current of increasingly secularised political thought in the 1650s.⁶ Within this group of radical conservatives, inspired prophets played a minor role. Rogers characterises the inspired utterances of Fifth Monarchists John Rogers and Christopher Feake as "spiteful verbosities and foolish antics".⁷ Feake's actions were always "verging on the eccentric".⁸ Rogers' visions were the result of a troubled childhood, and indicate some form of mental abnormality. As a child Rogers had a deep-seated fear of death, although he was utterly fascinated by it and spent most of his time attempting to understand or prepare for it. P. G. Rogers believes that "it is not surprising that a boy who subjected himself to such a morbid way of life should show signs of mental unbalance."⁹

Bernard Capp sees the Fifth Monarchists as part of the radical explosion which accompanied the English Civil War and Interregnum. According to Capp the Fifth Monarchists have been unfairly labelled as "irrational" by historians. Unlike Rogers, he does not view the Fifth Monarchists as backward-looking. Capp sees the group as a definite product of the times in which they lived. The millennial fervour which characterised Fifth Monarchist attitudes in religion and politics was typical of the

⁶ Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men, pp. 154-155.

⁷ Ibid., p. 154.

⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

period. Similar views were held by members of the government, including Major-General Harrison and, until 1653, Oliver Cromwell himself. "Irrational", Capp points out, is a subjective term at best. Events and people must be considered within the proper context.¹⁰

Capp views Fifth Monarchist use of inspired prophecy in a similar manner. He seems to agree with Rogers that the "sanity of many of these prophets may be doubted"; however, the forms which this madness took "testify to the ideas and preoccupations" of their society.¹¹ Millennial ideas were widespread and accepted by individuals at all levels of society. Capp believes that English people were preoccupied with understanding the prophecies in the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation. Because the activities of prophets were consistent with the times in which they lived, they managed to elicit some popular respect and support. Both Capp and Rogers give only brief attention to inspired prophecy, concentrating more upon Fifth Monarchist use of biblical exegesis as the basis of ideology and authority.¹²

The first work to give more than scant attention to English inspired prophets is Keith Thomas's comprehensive and thought provoking Religion and the Decline of Magic (1971). In this work, Thomas attempts to trace the changes in circumstances and

¹⁰ Bernard Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, pp. 14, 40-41, 54, 66-67, 73.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 32-33, 43.

¹² Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men, passim.; Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, passim.

ideas which led sixteenth and seventeenth century contemporaries to reject magic as a means of understanding and controlling their world, and replace it with science and religion. Thomas suggests that by 1660, and certainly by 1700, new intellectual developments had deepened the gulf between elite and popular concepts of the universe and its workings. This period saw the rise of a more mechanical and scientific understanding of the universe in which supernatural explanations became increasingly unsatisfactory as answers to the questions which people asked of the world around them. The literate leadership had no doubt that they belonged to "a different mental world" than their lower order contemporaries.¹³ This change in mental attitude resulted in a decline in belief in all forms of prophecy: astrological, ancient, biblical, and inspired. While supernatural belief may have been breaking down, supernatural activities still had utility. Witchcraft was an effective straw man for keeping unruly members of society in line.¹⁴ Astrology had uses in understanding and predicting the weather. As well, Thomas sees the heavenly art as the forerunner to modern sociology.¹⁵ Inspired prophecy also had its uses in Thomas's scheme.

In discussing inspired prophecy Thomas notes the high percentage of women who took on the role of heavenly messenger.

¹³ Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1971), p. 666.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 552-564.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 285, 349-357, 643, 645.

Their involvement in this form of expression was "a response to the social obstacles with which [they] had to contend". Denied access to more traditional means of expression, women "who tried to break into these male preserves were very liable to develop a bizarre exterior, if only as a form of self-defense". Thomas believes that the presence of women as prophets partially derives from "the fact that the best hope of gaining an ear for female utterance was to represent them as the result of divine revelation."¹⁶ Thomas, therefore, sees these prophets as either consciously or unconsciously addressing their own problems in their prophecies. The inference that they merely "represented" their ideas as divine inspiration indicates Thomas's belief that prophecy proved to be a particularly safe vehicle for expressing dangerous views. This idea is reiterated in his discussion of male visionary prophets. He states that "they too found it easier to represent their demands as the result of heavenly visions than to risk putting them forward as their private opinions."¹⁷ Resort to divine authority allowed prophets to gain at least temporary respect and success.¹⁸ Only the most sophisticated of radicals "could afford to dispense with" prophecy.¹⁹

Thomas sees prophecy as having been used as a cover for the

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 139-140.

spread of dangerous views. This use showed rationality which rises above the lunatic label under which most of those who claimed inspiration laboured. Inspiration was a consciously used vehicle, and Thomas admonishes those historians who wish to see prophets as "psychotics, the victims of hallucinations brought on by fasting or of hysteria induced by sexual repression."²⁰ Prophecy was a calculated front for the spread of unpopular political, religious, and social views. While on the surface prophecies seemed inspired, the intent of the visions as political or social propaganda was "usually transparent".²¹

Thomas stresses that "the over-whelming majority of those who claimed divine authority for their utterances were seeking authority for a political or social programme."²² He uses the Winchester minister John Brayne's 1649 sermon as an illustration. Brayne envisioned the downfall and total end of monarchy. He believed this destruction would begin in England and spread throughout the world. Thomas concludes: "[i]t was a long time

²⁰ Ibid., p. 149. Thomas refers the reader to Cohn's The Pursuit of the Millennium, Nigel Walker's Crime and Insanity in England 3 Vols., (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1968), and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's Les Paysons de Languedoc (Paris: 1966). Walker sees prophets as at least "partially insane", although he really only discusses the case of one prophet, the Elizabethan William Hacket (pp. 38-39). Le Roy Ladurie discusses "prophetic hysteria", which he sees as partially the result of sexual repression, although other economic and social factors play a part. (see The Peasants of Languedoc trans. John Day, Chicago: University of Illinois, 1974, pp. 274-285, 301-302).

²¹ Ibid., p. 139.

²² Ibid., p. 140.

before sentiments of this kind could safely be expressed in non-religious form. Meanwhile religious prophecy provided an admirable vehicle for radical propaganda."²³ Thomas, it seems, has chosen to ignore the great quantity of contemporary literature which expressed the same views in non-religious terms.²⁴ His book has been rightly criticised for its decidedly functional slant, and for the subjectivity of many of his ideas.²⁵ He admits that a number of claims he makes cannot be backed by evidence. These notions were the result of the general "feel" Thomas gained from examining the vast amount of material used in his study.²⁶ It is his hope that future studies will uphold and substantiate his assertions.

Many of Thomas's suggestions were examined and studied by Christopher Hill in what must be considered the best work on the

²³ Ibid., p. 149.

²⁴ Some of this literature even appeared prior to 1649. See for example the anonymous pamphlet The People informed of their Oppressors and Oppression, Unto which is added a sentence of Deposition against Rich. II and Edward II (London: 1648), TT E 536 (17). See also Anonymous The Peoples Right Briefly Asserted [advocating the trial of Charles I] (London: 1649), TT E 538 (13); John Canne, The Golden Rule, or Justice Advanced, Wherein is Shewed that the Commons Assembled in Parliament have a lawfull power to arraign the King for Tyranny, Treason and other misdemeanors By John Canne, Printed for Peter Cole (London: 1649), TT E 543 (6). A parliamentary ordinance of similar import appeared the day following Charles execution: 30 January 1649. An Act Prohibiting the Proclaiming of any person to be King of England or Ireland Printed by John Field. E 1062 (27).

²⁵ See Hildred Geertz, "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic." The Journal of Interdisciplinary History No. III, (1975), pp. 71-93.

²⁶ Ibid., p. x.

radicals of the English Revolution: The World Turned Upside Down (1972). Hill's book is an analysis of what he terms the "revolt within the Revolution". Most important for him is the "fascinating flood of radical ideas" which this internal revolution brought forth. While the revolution he chronicles ultimately failed, Hill believes that the study of such ideas can illuminate not only the radicals, but English society as a whole. It is Hill's hope that The World Turned Upside Down will help to rescue the radicals from the label of "lunatic fringe" under which they had been placed by previous generations of historians.²⁷

Hill's discussion of prophecy is concerned with astrology, ancient prophecies and Biblical interpretation. His study of these forms of prediction is geared to understanding the "psychology of prophecy", that is to understand the meaning of these forms of prophecy for contemporaries. Why were they accepted? Why were they necessary? Hill discussed inspired prophecy within the context of enthusiastic madness. In some instances he believes that the inspired prophets he examines were mentally unbalanced: "The effort to grasp new truths, truths which would turn the world upside down, may have been too much for men like Thomas Tany and George Foster. A partial lapse from 'sanity' may have been the price to be paid for certain

²⁷ Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), p. 13.

insights."²⁸ For many such divine madness was genuine. For others it was more calculated. "There is another possibility" states Hill, "that men were simply covering up, allowing themselves to express dangerous thoughts under cover of insanity or delusions, from which one could retreat afterwards."²⁹ Such actions were therefore "deliberate forms of self-advertisement or advertisement for the cause". Prophecy "was an easy way for a member of the lower classes to win attention, especially perhaps a lower class radical."³⁰

Hill keeps his conclusions concerning inspired prophecy open-ended. The reader is left with a series of questions pertaining to the nature of inspired "madness", but with no firm opinion as to which answers best fulfill their terms. The questions themselves are valid, and form a useful starting point in an attempt to understand the nature of visionary prophecy. "What are we to conclude?" asks Hill, "Self-advertisement by the lower orders? Delivering dangerous opinions in a way which would enable them to be disowned? Mental breakdown? The strain of novelty?"³¹ Hill's questions are couplets, and historians who have given attention to prophecy have either viewed it as self-advertisement from a safe position, or madness caused by the novelty of circumstances. Hill himself has examined both notions

²⁸ Ibid., p. 224.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 225.

³¹ Ibid., p. 227.

in subsequent works, although he has emphasised the latter idea. Because he is the historian who has been most concerned with understanding the radicals of this period, Hill is also the historian who has given the most attention to inspired prophets.

His 1974 work Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England contains a chapter devoted to the Welsh prophet Arise Evans (1607-c1660), who is the main focus of Hill's examinations of prophets from this point on. Change and Continuity is a compilation of essays previously presented or published by Hill. "A main theme in all of them is the interrelationship between material and intellectual aspects of the Revolution, between economics, politics and ideas."³² Within this context Hill discusses Evans' life as an illustration of "that transition from what we call backwardness to what we call modernity which fascinates historians today."³³ Evans' prophecies show his reliance on a divine system which incorporates politics and religion in one coherent body. During the mid-seventeenth century this system was being replaced by a more secular view, which after 1660 saw a separation of religion and politics. Hill views Evans less as a prophet, and more as a political journalist born too soon. He was the product of the London of the 1630s and 1640s.³⁴ Hill describes the city during this

³² Hill, Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974), pp. ix-x.

³³ Ibid., p. 48.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

period "as a training school in radical politics."³⁵ Evans inspiration is described as being the result of a "mild mental abnormality".

Hill more fully explains Evans' "mental abnormality" in "The Case of Arise Evans" (1976), which he co-authored with Michael Sheppard.³⁶ Hill and Sheppard are attempting to write what they term "a historical sociology of mental disorder".³⁷ They argue that Evans' visions resulted from "a typical mental psychosis of a revelatory" nature.³⁸ Prior to the Civil War, Evans' contemporaries had viewed his prophetic activities as evidence of insanity. However, in the heightened millennial atmosphere of the 1640s these same visions were taken as evidence of divine inspiration. Evans was mentally unbalanced, but so, it appears, were the times in which he lived. His acceptance did not derive from his activities, which had not changed from one period to the next, but rather from the changed nature of the times. Evans' disappearance after the Restoration also points to the normalcy of his actions in the troubled period of the English Revolution and Interregnum, and to the abnormal nature of his endeavours outside of this period. Hill believes that Evans was a representative of his times. Like many of his contemporaries

³⁵ Ibid., p. 59

³⁶ Christopher Hill and Michael Sheppard, "The Case of Arise Evans." Psychological Medicine Vol. 6, (1976), pp. 351-358.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 351.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 357.

Evans viewed the Bible as divinely inspired, and as with other "simpler men" he applied its texts directly to the problems of his world and time "with no idea of the difficulties of translation."³⁹ In his prophecies "religion was used shamelessly and blatantly for political purposes." ⁴⁰

Other studies have viewed prophecy within the narrower scope of sexual politics. In "Women as Prophets during the English Civil War"(1982), and "The Prophet and her Audience: Gender and Knowledge in the World Turned Upside Down"(1988) Phyllis Mack attempts to understand the experiences of female prophets in Civil War England.⁴¹ The first article seeks to understand the experience of the prophets themselves. Mack makes the claim that prophecy was a way for women to seek empowerment. This can be noted in the content of the prophecies, and in the reaction of rulers to the heralds of the Lord.⁴² The second article is an effort to understand the reactions of contemporaries to God's messengers. She wanted to determine "what made observers finally decide that a particular individual was a prophet, a witch or a

³⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴¹ Phyllis Mack, "Women as Prophets During the English Civil War." Feminist Studies Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1982), pp. 19-47; Idem., "The Prophet and Her Audience: Gender and Knowledge in the World Turned Upside Down." in Geoff Ely and William Hunt, eds., Reviving the English Revolution: Reflections and Elaborations on the Work of Christopher Hill (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 139-152.

⁴² Mack, "Women as Prophets", pp. 45-47, passim.; Idem., "The Prophet and Her Audience", pp. 147-149.

pitiabile lunatic." ⁴³ Mack believes that reception of female prophets was based upon the notion that women were more spiritual than men. They were "associated with a spiritual potential that was always fluid and potentially sinister."⁴⁴ Suppression of female visionaries was the response of misogynist male rulers attempting to uphold patriarchy. Mack's conclusions are weak because the spiritual power which she describes could presumably be drawn upon by prophets, witches or lunatics, and is therefore an unsatisfactory explanation of why contemporaries considered particular women to be prophets, and others to be witches or lunatics. Her articles, however, are informative for two reasons. First, Mack stresses the true belief of both prophets and audiences in inspiration and prophecy. Secondly she points out that prophets unconsciously took their own problems into their dreams, and as a result prophetic utterances tend to reflect the concerns of God's messengers.

What can we conclude about inspired prophecy? What was its nature and role? It is my intention to examine inspired prophecy in order better to understand its workings, role and purpose in England in the troubled years of the mid-seventeenth century. I believe that the character of the prophetic role has been obscured because historians have concentrated upon the idiosyncrasy of the political message, or on the ecstatic and erratic behaviour which often accompanied divine utterance. It

⁴³ Mack, "The Prophet and Her Audience", p. 140.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

was the business of seventeenth century English visionary prophets, as it was for their biblical forerunners, to make known God's pleasure or displeasure at the state of contemporary affairs. Political events were measured by their religious and cosmic consequences. In my view the discussion of inspired prophets as radicals has also been somewhat distorting. While the particular brand of inspired prophecy which rose up in the seventeenth century relied on radical Protestant ideas, the actual role of prophet was a traditional one. This point needs to be remembered if prophecy is to be perceived properly. The visionaries of this period drew on a curious mixture of tradition and innovation. Inspired utterance was grounded in a belief in the holistic coherence of the cosmos, but energized by an individualistic understanding of events within the universe. As such, prophecy is both illustrative and symptomatic of the transformation which was occurring within English society during the 1640s and 1650s. Inspired prophecy grew out of a concern with understanding God's plans for the individual and the nation at large in a period when the divine order of the universe appeared to be collapsing.

The people of this period believed in a divinely ordered universe which worked to a providentially ordained plan. This belief was necessary if prophecy was to be accepted. It is also important to place inspired prophecy within the context of rising millennial and apocalyptic fervour, and the radicalisation of Protestant religion which characterised sixteenth and seventeenth

century England. It was from this radicalisation that the type of inspired prophecy common in this period arose. Placing divine utterances in context also shows that the Civil War and the execution of Charles I were more than merely politically significant events. These occurrences both reflected and affected the universal order which God had set in place. Charles I was God's representative. What did his death at the hands of his subjects mean in terms of this relationship? Different prophets came to different understandings of the event. Christopher Hill has described Arise Evans, and by implication all inspired prophets of this period, as "a tiny footnote to history".⁴⁵ This cannot be denied; however, footnotes are important and interesting parts of historical works. This is also true of historical activities and periods.

Most of the primary material used in this thesis comes from the collection of tracts and pamphlets accumulated by the London bookseller George Thomason (1602?-1664) between 1640 and 1661. The collection contains 22,225 items bound in 2008 volumes.⁴⁶ Thomason's collection includes a wide variety of pamphlets, tracts, broadsheets, newsheets, and government proclamations. Numerous pamphlets contain religious commentary. Others are devoted to science, medicine or witchcraft. Many are sermons, and a large number are satires and plays. All tracts have been

⁴⁵ Hill, Change and Continuity, p. 74.

⁴⁶ Thomason Tracts, p. xix. The breakdown according to type of publication is as follows: 14,942 pamphlets, 97 manuscripts, and 7,216 newspapers. (p. xxi)

listed in an index by subject, and author, and listed chronologically by date of publication.

The modern index of this collection lists over forty entries under the heading "Prophecies". These prophecies include not only those of inspired prophets, but a number of astrological and purportedly "ancient" prophecies as well. While all pamphlets listed in this category were examined, emphasis was placed upon the works of inspired prophets. The Thomason Tracts were also searched for pamphlets appearing under the names of various individual prophets. In some cases this uncovered up to a dozen prophecies by particular messengers which had not been listed under the "Prophecies" heading.⁴⁷ Pamphlets attributed to various groups with which prophets were known to be associated, such as the Fifth Monarchists, were also examined. Works of this type help to build the context within which prophecy flourished. For the critical years of 1648 to 1654, the period which saw the greatest amount of prophetic activity, the chronological index was searched title by title, and likely prophetic texts were examined. While a title search may appear pointless, this is not the case. The titles and title-pages of seventeenth century pamphlets were designed to allow the reader to know as much as possible of what the pamphlet contained. They were condensed

⁴⁷ Arise Evans, for example, had two works listed under "Prophecies", although all thirteen of his pamphlets were based on visions and prophecies.

versions of the pamphlets themselves.⁴⁸ Also, the titles usually contain the names not only of the author, but of printers and of those people who paid for the printing. Such information is valuable because it can help establish the social connections of the prophets. In addition, anti-prophetic pamphlets and tracts were examined. In a few cases such pamphlets yielded new names to be searched, while all gave a good sense of how at least a vocal part of society felt about the prophets themselves.

The newsbooks Mercurius Politicus, Mercurius Pacificus, The Public Intelligencer, The Faithful Scout, Mercurius Pragmaticus and The Parliamentary Intelligencer were perused, although due to their length a thorough examination could not be undertaken. They did, however, provide some insight into the activities and reception of the prophets of this period. The facsimiles of the English Experience Series and the Scholars Press Reprints were explored, although in comparison to the Thomason Tracts they offered little material. The Calendar of State Papers helped somewhat in understanding the official attitudes toward various prophets, and toward prophetic activity in general. As well, the State Papers provided information useful in fleshing out the histories of the prophets under study.

Once this great amount of material had been isolated and examined, certain prophets and prophecies were chosen for study. The prophets were selected with a number of criteria in mind.

⁴⁸ H. M. Long, "'Appearance into Publique Light'. Aspects of Control and Use of Print in London in the 1640s." LaTrobe University, Ph.D.. 1984., pp. 239-241.

Prolific prophets were examined because their pamphlets could best illustrate a continuity of thought and intent. They are also the prophets who discussed by other historians. I disagree with the interpretations that various historians have put forward concerning the inspired prophets of this period. Examining the same prophets allows me to more directly question their conclusions. Anonymous pamphlets have been rejected for two reasons. The first and most obvious is that the identity of the author helps to flesh out the context in which the work was written, even if the information available on the writer is slight. Secondly, most of the anonymous pamphlets were quite short, and could not provide any continuity of thought. These points being made, however, anonymous pamphlets have been used at times to illustrate that particular prophetic ideas and images were not isolated to specific prophets.

These sources are not without their drawbacks. The vast collection of pamphlets, tracts, advertisements and petitions compiled by Thomason, while comprehensive, cannot be considered complete. It is, however, deemed to be a total representation of the London printings.⁴⁹ The gaps in the Thomason Tracts are made up somewhat by the English Experience Series and the Scholars Press reprints, but again, these collections are not complete. The major drawback of these sources is the fact that most prophetic utterance was never written down. The published examples of prophecy, and the descriptions of prophetic endeavors

⁴⁹ Thomason Tracts, Introduction, pp. xxi-xxii.

can be considered as only a percentage of the total activity of the period. However, this situation cannot be avoided in any study, and the material which these sources present is certainly ample enough to provide considerable insight into the workings of inspired prophecy in the mid-seventeenth century England.

Chapter I: An Ordered Universe

In order to comprehend the nature and significance of mid-seventeenth century inspired prophecy it is crucial first to grasp the intellectual system which supported belief in the efficacy of prophecy. For English people in the seventeenth century, God was much more involved in daily affairs than He is for most of us today. God ordered the universe and ordained the course of events. The universe was constituted in an understandable and harmonious pattern, and people knew that they could discover God's purpose by a close study of earthly activities. On an ideal level, this universal order tended to be perceived in three mutually reinforcing ways: as a "great chain", as corresponding planes of being (macrocosm and microcosm), and as a cosmic dance.

The idea of the great chain of being was premised upon the notion that all objects, both animate and inanimate, had an assigned place in the hierarchy of creation. The chain started with God and moved down through the ranks of angels to men, and from men to animals. Alternatively the chain was seen as ascending from the lowest forms to the greatest. Thomas Elyot (1490?-1546) described the chain in this manner in The booke named the Governour (1531): "Behold also the order that God hath put generally in all his creatures, beginning at the most inferior or

base and ascending upward." ⁵⁰ Inanimate objects also had their designated places. In his History of the World (1614), Sir Walter Raleigh stated that God had made differences between "the cedar and the shrub, and among the stones [had] given the fairest tincture to the ruby and the quickest light to the diamond."⁵¹

The universe was not merely constituted of vertical linkages. Tudor and early Stuart English people also believed that creation consisted of corresponding planes of reality. E. M. W. Tillyard sees this as a horizontal linkage, and in many ways it is. It needs, however, to be pointed out that while these planes corresponded, they were also arranged "one below the other",⁵² much as the links in the great chain. Every level of existence contained within itself creatures and objects which conformed to creatures and objects on other planes. God was the King of Heaven, the sun was the king of heavenly bodies, the eagle was the king of birds, and all these corresponded to human kings. Contemporaries viewed the world as both macrocosm and microcosm. The earth was the microcosm of the universal macrocosm, humans the microcosm of the earthly macrocosm. This idea was well explained by Andrew Crooke in A Hermeticall Banquet (1652):

[F]or whatsoever the greater World contains, the like

⁵⁰ Quoted in E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 12.

⁵¹ Walter Raleigh, The History of the World (1614), quoted in Ibid., p. 11.

⁵² Ibid., p. 83.

shall you finde exquisitely exprest in this little
World Man. So that in Man is Natures....Mirrour
wherein the Eye of Reason may compendiously
comtemplate....his six Days of Labour. There may you
see the Originall of Miniature, where God....hath
limb'd the Worlds Pourtraict in small.⁵³

The relationship between all aspects of creation was strengthened by the fact that all things were conceived to be made up of four basic elements combined in varied degrees. These elements were earth, air, fire and water, and each represented certain strengths and weaknesses. In order for an organism or object to be in harmony with the universe, these elements had to be perfectly balanced within it. The four bodily humours of Blood, Phlegm, Melancholy and Choler were also seen as characterising the four basic elements of the universe. They embodied the opposed traits of hot, cool, dry, wet. A proper mixture of these elements was essential in a healthy body. Much of the practice of medicine in the early modern period was based on the idea of creating a balance of these humours. Leeching, the draining of an imbalanced excess of blood, is one example of such practice.⁵⁴ The universal harmony of humours also applied to the yearly cycle. The four seasons corresponded to the four elements. An unseasonably long and hot summer caused problems

⁵³ Andrew Crooke, A Hermeticall Banquet, Drest By a Sparagickall Cook: for the better Preservation of the Microcosme. (London: 1652), Thomason Tracts, [TT] E 1306 (1), p. B1.

⁵⁴ See Allen G. Debus, Medicine in Seventeenth Century England (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1974]) for an examination of the medical profession at this time. For a good, brief, exposition of popular medicine, see Doreen Evenden Nagy, Popular Medicine in Early Modern England, (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1989).

for the earth similar to those a high fever caused the human body.

This idea of bodily humours encouraged people to believe themselves to be at the mercy of the physical world. The tides showed that the moon had effect on wet elements. Through universal "correspondence", the moon was also thought to influence the moistest area of the human body: the brain. It is for this reason that the insane were considered "lunatics", and "moonstruck". Contemporary views of madness indicate a hierarchy of lunacy. In the parlance of the period only those of lowly social origins were considered to be "mad" or "lunatic". This condition was governed by the humour phlegm, which was the wettest of the humours. Upper and middling ranked individuals had their "madness" ruled by the drier, more stable humour of melancholy. Only the lowly could be truly mad. The hierarchy of lunacy shows that even madness and irrationality were ordered, and demonstrates the manner in which notions of order, rank and hierarchy pervaded this society.

The universe was also conceived of as a cosmic dance. If all dancers acted in concert, a perfect whole could be created. William Shakespeare pointed out the musical nature of universal harmony and order, and indicated the interdependence of all aspects of the dance:

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And Hark, what discord follows,⁵⁵

⁵⁵ William Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Sc. iii.

This harmonic dance gave the universe its motion and life. Chains and planes were static. Only in dance did the universe work: each element, humour and creature articulating with one another in set pieces of universal harmony. When all things held their assigned place and performed their designated duties the universe functioned properly. Harmony, whether in human society or the greater universe, could only be achieved through rank and order. The movement of the universe and society, like the gears of a clock, worked best when both great and small synchronised their motions.

Human society took its order from the structure of the universe. Thomas Starkey (1495?-1538) described society as a political body in his A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset (1534?). The text is an imaginary dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Thomas Lupset, in which Pole describes the political nation as a human body. According to Starkey, "thys body hath hys partys wych resembyl also the partys of the body of man, of wych the most general to our purpos be thes, the hart hede handys & fete".⁵⁶ The heart was the king or ruler, the head represented the "under offycerys by the pryncys appoynted"; the hands symbolised the craftsmen and warriors; while the feet depicted the labouring people.⁵⁷ Starkey went on to state that "the dew proportyon of one parte to a nother must be observed and therin

⁵⁶ Thomas Starkey, A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset, (1534?) T. F. Mayer, ed., Camden Fourth Series, Vol. 37, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1989), p. 33.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

stondyth the [corporal] beuty chefely of thys [polytyk] body".⁵⁸ Starkey's body breaks down into four harmonious parts, the same number as the humours of which a living body was thought to be composed.

The metaphor of society as a body politic was not unique to Starkey. John Norden (1548-1625?), in his Vicissitude Rerum (1590?), illustrated the manner in which the balance within society corresponded to the balance of the universe:

A body politic or public state
Hath like dissents, which yet assenting stands.
The king the subject and the magistrate,
Noble and base, rich poor, peace and warlike bands,
Law religion, idle working hands,
Old young, weak strong, good men and evil, be
Dislike in parts yet in consort agree. ⁵⁹

John Donne, in his "An Anatomie of the World" (1611/1612), also used the idea of a body to describe society. Donne's work was different in that he used a woman's body as representative of the decay and death of the perfect, prelapsarian world.⁶⁰ While Donne's use of a female representative for society may have been unusual, the metaphor of "society as body" was well accepted.⁶¹

Much of the emotional appeal of the body politic metaphor

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁵⁹ John Norden, Vicissitude Rerum (1590?), quoted in Tillyard, p. 89.

⁶⁰ John Donne, "An Anatomie of the World, 1st and 2nd Anniversaries" (1611/1612), in Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, John Hayward, ed., (London: Nonesuch Press, 1949), pp. 195-228.

⁶¹ Ben Johnson viewed Donne's use of a female representative as "prophane", and felt that his work was "full of blasphemies". Quoted in Hayward, ed., p. 194.

derived from the parallel conception of the church as the visible body of Christ,⁶² and this idea reinforced notions of continuity between the transcendent and earthly realms. In England the links between heaven and earth were doubly strengthened by the fact that the king was head of both secular and religious society. The king was the representative of God, and as such was the key symbol of order. "Kings are justly called Gods", declared James I, "for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will consider the attributes of God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a King."⁶³ The monarch was usually represented as the head or heart of the body politic, and without head or heart the body must die. All order and law derived from God, and was transferred from God to the nation through the king. The heavenly order, and the king's place within it, was well understood by people at all levels of society and education. When John Shilleto, a butcher from Earls Colne, Essex, was arrested shortly after the death of Elizabeth I, he commented on the place of law without a monarch. "God save the quene she is dead, wherefore [ye] heare, this is Nick Barley's law. He is no

⁶² Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics (New York: Atheneum Books, 1974), p. 171.

⁶³ The Political Works of James I Introduction by C. H. McIlwain, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), p. 307.

Kinge, I say, he is no kinge till he be crowned."⁶⁴ Nicholas Barley was the constable responsible for Shilleto's arrest. The implication of the butcher's remark is clear. No king meant no law---or at least no legitimate law.

Kings were considered to have two bodies: their physical bodies, and the embodiment of their power. They were consecrated into their embodiment at their coronation when annointed with holy oil. This act sanctified them in their role as God's lieutenant. The mystical power with which this ceremony imbued the monarch can be seen in the idea of the king's touch. It was assumed that the king could cure disease with the mere touch of a hand. Usually the disease treated was scrofula---the king's evil---although presumably his power extended to include other afflictions as well.⁶⁵

Throughout English history until the Civil War, the monarch's sanctification had ensured a measure of public invulnerability for the king's person, although revolts did occur when it was felt that a monarch's actions had lifted the divine sanction.⁶⁶ Having been secured in their role as the embodiment

⁶⁴ Earls Colne, The Records of an English Village, 1475-1725 Alan MacFarlane, ed., (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 198?), Assize, 1602.

⁶⁵ This type of power had been noted of kings in most societies and cultures throughout the world. See the articles in David Cannandine and Simon Price, eds., Rituals of Royalty; Power and Ceremony in Traditional Societies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), passim.

⁶⁶ Michael Walzer, Regicide and Revolution; Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 8-34.

of law and order they could not easily be openly threatened. The execution of Charles I marked a significant change in attitude toward monarchs. Public execution killed both the body and embodiment of the king.⁶⁷ The idea that a political body set up by humans had destroyed the annointed representative of God shook the very foundations of universal order. The world was literally turned upside down, and prophets looked to God to help them steer society out of the difficult and dangerous times in which they lived.

In a world which was so structured on every level it naturally followed that even the course of events was ordained. People looked to the world around them for clues in understanding God's decreed plan. Astrology had been increasing in popularity from at least the middle of the sixteenth century, both in England and on the continent. For all practical purposes, astrology had been re-discovered during the Renaissance. It was closely tied to the hermetic notion that God had revealed the true knowledge of the universe to the ancients. Astrologers accepted that this wisdom could be read in the stars. Hermetic tradition was based in the belief that Hermes Trismegistus, an ancient gentile philosopher of the time of Moses, had foretold the coming of Christianity through his knowledge of the Divine Mind. The methods which he employed were relayed to Europeans through the works of Plato.

Hermetic "science" had a strong following among English

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

scholars throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. John Dee, court astrologer for Elizabeth I, believed that astrology was a form of Divine Magic which gave a fuller understanding of the working of the universe, and a new method to comprehend and worship God.⁶⁸ In 1614 the classical scholar Isaac Causabon (1599-1614) placed the origins of the hermetic texts within the Christian era,⁶⁹ but the debunking of astrology's historical origins did not destroy its influence. In fact, the use of the heavenly art grew steadily, and it achieved its greatest popularity in the 1640's. It was used to predict such diverse things the weather, political upheavals, the outcome and success of voyages, business deals, and love affairs, as well as to locate lost or stolen articles.⁷⁰

Coincident with the rise of astrology was the increasing use of ancient prophecies and auguries. Prophecies by such past seers as Merlin and Sybylla Tiburtina were given authority by scriptural evidence of prophecy, and through the long tradition of oracles in western society. Thomas Fuller noted in 1655 that the English were said always to carry "an old prophecy about with them in their pockets". Bishop Hacket agreed. "We English" he

⁶⁸ R. Deacon, John Dee; Scientist, Astrologer and Secret Agent to Elizabeth I (London: Frederick Muller, 1968), p. 41.

⁶⁹ P. J. French, John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 68.

⁷⁰ Bernard Capp, English Almanacs; Astrology and the Popular Press, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), Chp. 1; Patrick Curry, Prophecy and Power; Astrology in Early Modern England, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), Chp. 1; Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, Chps. 10-13.

professed, "are observed to be too credulous of vain prophecies such as are fathered upon Merlin and no better authors."⁷¹

Natural and supernatural phenomena were also studied to predict the course of events. These included interpreting the flights of birds and solar eclipses. Reports of the sky raining blood, or battles in the air between armies of birds or soldiers, were seen as indications of events to come. The increasing incidence of monstrous births was considered as the signpost of a world gone wrong. Such births produced deformed, "monstrous" children, and it was usual to interpret them as evidence of the evil state of the country.⁷² During the English Civil War the birth of a child with two heads was seen to represent a diseased body politic, the two heads representing the king and parliament.⁷³

The preceeding picture of an ordered universe is one which cannot be taken as a given. It gained its greatest expression in

⁷¹ Quoted in Hill and Sheppard, "Arise Evans", p. 352.

⁷² Patricia Crawford "Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth Century England." Past and Present No. 91, (May, 1981), pp. 47-73. Children were believed to be formed from a mother's menstrual blood. This blood was the repository of all the evil humours in her body, hence the monthly purging of excess "evil" through menstruation. In calmer times these births were considered as indicative of the sins of the mother.

⁷³ John Vicars, Prodigies and Apparitions, or Englands Warning Pieces (London: 1642); Anonymous, Vox Infantis, or the Prophetically Child (London: 1649), TT E 566 (27), passim.; Edward Hyde, A Wonder and Yet no Wonder: a great Red Dragon in Heaven (London: Printed by J. Macock for Giles Calvert, 1651), TT E 1361 (2), passim.; S. Thurston, The Three Eclipses in 1652 (London: 1652), TT E 1343 (3); Anonymous, A Strange and True Relation of Several Wonderful and Miraculous Sightes seen in the Air 15 Feb. and this present March (London: Printed for J. Jones, 1661), TT E 1084 (4).

the late sixteenth century, an indication that it was being questioned. Changes in intellectual attitudes, however, generally trickle down from academic circles to the general public. The ideal reality discussed in this chapter was still very much in place for the common people of this period. Nancy Maguire has argued in her article "The Theatrical Mask/Masque of Politics: the Case of Charles I" (1989) that royalists used the king's trial and execution to reinforce the idea of a divinely ordained universe and kingship.⁷⁴ In the "court Masque" of trial and execution Charles I was the main actor, and Maguire seems to indicate that he believed himself to be divinely enthroned. By making Charles I's execution into theatre royalists were able to maintain the power and purity of kingship, and this helped in the restoration of Charles II in 1660.⁷⁵ The contemporary author of The Bloody Court reported that a cloud covered the face of the sun at the moment of the king's execution "as [if] loathing to see this Horrid Murder."⁷⁶ The loud groan which supposedly went out from the crowd as Charles I's head was severed also seems to indicate popular belief in the divine authority of kings. David Underdown's description of the ready acceptance of the common people for the returned king and returned "traditional society" demonstrates the retention of "traditional" ideas at the common

⁷⁴ Nancy Klein Maguire, "The Theatrical Mask/Masque of Politics: The Case of Charles I" Journal of British Studies No. 28 (January 1989), 1-22, passim.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 22, and passim.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Ibid., p. 16.

level.⁷⁷

The context within which inspired prophecy developed was one inclined toward a heightened concern for understanding the working of God's plans. The economic, social and religious troubles which England was experiencing in the early and mid-seventeenth century made many people believe that their world was coming to an end. This belief required them to attempt to understand God's plans and desires. An understanding of the context which spurred the need for inspired prophecy is essential if its role and nature are to be properly perceived.

⁷⁷ David Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, passim.

Chapter II: The Religious Context of Mid-Seventeenth Century Inspired Prophecy

There are a number of developments in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which need to be discussed in order to understand the context in which the inspired prophecy of the Civil War and Interregnum developed. If the prophets of this period are to be properly understood, the evolution of millenarian and apocalyptic thought, and the rise of Puritanism and radical protestant sects need to be outlined. Prophecy gained credence in mid-seventeenth century England because of the violent and tumultuous state of social, political, and religious affairs. Events, however troubling, were understood by contemporaries to be providentially ordained. The world worked not only within a divine model, but also to a pre-determined divine plan. English people of this period knew that God interceded constantly and perpetually in their daily affairs. Period writings show the vigilance with which people attempted to read God's intentions in the events around them. Providentialism was at the heart of Puritan thinking, both in religious and political matters.⁷⁸ This Puritan providentialism, the searching out of God's signposts---both internally and externally---was radicalised by sectarians. This radicalisation was one of the key elements in the development of inspired

⁷⁸ Blair Worden, "Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England." Past and Present No. 109, (November 1985), p. 55; Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p. 93.

prophecy of mid-seventeenth century England. Combined with this process was a developing apocalypticism and millenarianism which lent both impetus and image to the prophetic process.

* * * *

Patrick Collinson has suggested that it is wrong to think of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Protestant church as a distinct entity which could be labelled "Anglican". More correctly it should be viewed as a series of shifting opinions on theology and church government, a diversity which occurred at all levels within the established church.⁷⁹ During the reign of Elizabeth I "Puritans" were those who sought to cleanse the English church of unnecessary Catholic externals, such as kneeling at communion and the use of vestments, altars and "idols".⁸⁰ They also wanted to reform morals, and make "godly" behaviour the hallmark of a true Christian home. Most wished to reform the church from within. They accepted the church as it was, while at the same time working earnestly to change what they saw as improper and ungodly. For a minority, reform was seen as impossible. If they wished to worship in a properly ordered church, they needed to found their own separate congregations.⁸¹ These separatist

⁷⁹ Patrick Collinson, The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 92-140. See also D. M. Lloyd-James, The Puritans: Their Origins and Successes (Lymington: The Banner of Truth Press, 1987), pp. 249-257.

⁸⁰ Lloyd-James, The Puritans, pp. 249-250.

⁸¹ B. R. White, The English Separatist Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 49; Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea (New York: New York

churches established themselves slowly throughout the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both in England and abroad.⁸²

The urge to separatism in the seventeenth century was not a new phenomenon in Protestantism. English separatism had been proceeded by at least half a century in the Anabaptists and the Family of Love. Anabaptists insisted that true Christians needed to separate themselves from the mass of degenerate society.⁸³ This idea anticipated the beliefs of the radical sects in England. The late sixteenth century saw the rise of the first English separatist group. The Brownists, an association which followed the teachings of Robert Browne (1550?-1633?), emerged in the 1580's. They advocated the need for immediate church reformation, and felt that the restoration of the church should follow biblical tenets. They stressed the "present rule of the Risen Christ in the midst of his people by means of the power and practice of scriptural discipline", and believed that churches should be covenanted communities.⁸⁴ Following the Brownists came

University Press, 1963), pp. 33-63; Stephen Brachlow, "The Elizabethan Roots of Henry Jacob's Churchmanship: Refocusing the Historiographical Lens." Journal of Ecclesiastical History 36 (1985), pp. 228-254.

⁸² Morgan, Visible Saints, pp. 33-39.

⁸³ McGregor, "Baptists: Fount of all Heresy" in Barry Reay and J. F. McGregor, eds., Radical Religion in the English Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 21-58. See page 25.

⁸⁴ For the Brownists see B. R. White, The English Separatist Tradition, pp. 20-66. The quote is from p. 52. See also DNB, Vol. 7, pp. 57-61.

the Baptists. The Baptist movement originated from English refugees who fled to Holland in the late sixteenth century to enjoy the greater religious freedom offered by the United Provinces. Here they were introduced to Anabaptist ideas. The majority rejected the more extreme Anabaptist notions. Led by Thomas Helwys (1550?-1616?), a Nottinghamshire gentleman, they returned to London in 1612 to found the first General Baptist congregation. By 1626 four more congregations had sprung up in the London area. Influenced by Laudian persecution in the 1630's, some Baptists took on more radical ideas. This group became known as Particular Baptists. They preached the doctrine of adult baptism, and separation from the established church. Baptists were concerned with limiting the scope of church ordinances which might restrict the individual's capacity for inspired expression. At the same time groups known as Independents, who were "semi-separatists" from the English church, began to appear.⁸⁵ These groups believed that churches should be gathered by mutual consent, but did not fully separate from the established church in hopes that their own reform would spread to the church community at large.

The growing phenomenon of separatism in the English religious community produced groups with increasingly radical doctrines. In the 1640's and 1650's such societies as the Seekers, the Ranters, and the Quakers took the idea of an

⁸⁵ Murray Tolmie, The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London, 1616-1649 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 7-27.

individual knowledge of God to the extreme. Throughout the decade beginning in 1640, the Seekers expressed the most radical form of internalised religion. They often went "naked as a sign"⁸⁶, seeking their own spiritual redemption, following a path which led to "an enthusiasm of devotion."⁸⁷ They rejected any form of external ordinance, believing that it was the invisible, and not the visible, church which was important. They were never an organised body, and it was seldom that a group of Seekers met together. The Ranters gained their greatest notoriety in the late 1640's.⁸⁸ They rejected traditional social hierarchies, and fervently followed the direction of their own in-dwelling spirit. If their detractors can be believed, their beliefs consisted mainly of swearing and free love, although such hostile reports should be taken skeptically.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ This sort of physical metaphor was not unique to the Seekers. See the discussion of the Quaker William Simpson below, Chapter III.

⁸⁷ Smith, Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 7-8. For a fuller discussion of Seekers see Hill, World Turned Upside Down, Chps. 9 & 10; J. F. McGregor, "Seekers and Ranters" in Reay and McGregor, Radical Religion, pp. 121-139. See especially pp. 122-129.

⁸⁸ For Ranters see Hill, World Turned Upside Down, Chps. 9 & 10; McGregor, "Seekers and Ranters" in Reay and McGregor, Radical Religion, pp. 129-139.

⁸⁹ For hostile exposition of Ranter ideas, see John Taylor, Ranters of Bothe Sexes, Male and Female being thirteen or more, taken and imprisoned in the Gate-House at Westminster, and in the New Prison at Clerken Well (London: Printed for John Hammon, 1651), TT E 629 (15); Anonymous, The Ranters Ranting: with the apprehending examination and confession of John Collins, I. Shakespeare, Tho. Wilberforce and five more (London: Printed by B. Alsop, 1650), TT E 618 (8); Anonymous, The Ranting of the

Some historians feel that the Ranters were a fictional group invented by authorities to enforce social order. Certainly the opprobrium of the term itself kept many groups in line.⁹⁰

George Fox (1624-1691) launched Quakerism in the late 1640's, and the sect's "coming out of the north" seemed to be the fulfillment of biblical prophecies.⁹¹ For Quakers the ultimate earthly battle was spiritual; reform of any kind needed to begin with "the working of the spirit or light within upon the hearts and consciences of men and women."⁹² Many groups would only follow the commands of "king Jesus",⁹³ and because of this they were considered dangerous by those in power. For them the ultimate

Ranters, being a full relation of their uncivil Carriage and blasphemous words and actions at their mad meetings, and their belief concerning heaven and hell (London: Printed by B. A, 1650), TT E 616 (9).

⁹⁰ Quakers especially tried to disassociate themselves from any Ranter connections. For a discussion of the Ranters as fiction see J. C. Davis Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Davis's main claim is that the group was the invention of a sensationalistic press in the early 1650's. His analysis is weak, especially in light of evidence of people who considered themselves to be Ranters. If the group began as fictional, it certainly picked up real members. For a telling rebuttal to Davis's work, see Hill, "Abolishing the Ranters." in A Nation of Change and Novelty (London: Longman, 1990), pp. 152-194.

⁹¹ See Job 37:9; Jeremiah 4:6; Ezekiel 1:4, 39:2.

⁹² Barry Reay, The Quakers and the English Revolution (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), pp. 34, 36, 42. For a discussion of such "Heart religion" see N. H. Keeble, The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in late Seventeenth-Century England (Avon: Leicester University Press, 1987), pp. 204-214.

⁹³ S. J. Case, The Millennial Hope; a phase of war-time thinking (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918), pp. 192-193.

law was that created by God, and when this law ran counter to human ordinances, mere earthly statutes were disregarded and defied. "The spiritual man", as one contemporary noted, "judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man....All earthly things he commands....by the spirit of Christ in him he rules over all."⁹⁴ Within these groups the key element was an attempt to bear witness in behaviour and expression to the immediacy and presence of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵

While most of the radical groups in England in the middle of the seventeenth century believed that the reappearance of Christ would be an inner one, some believed in the physical reappearance of Christ. One such group was the Fifth Monarchists. The Fifth Monarchy movement developed within the gathered churches in the London area in the 1650's, the majority of membership being made up of Baptists. They believed in both an internal and an external bliss which would commence with the entering of Christ into the heart of the believer and into the nation at large. They felt that the country should be ruled by the precepts of the Bible, including the imposition of biblical laws and the constitution of a political leadership based upon the biblical Sanhedrin of seventy godly men.⁹⁶ The Fifth

⁹⁴ Richard Sibbes, Beames of Divine Light (1639), pp. 231-233. Quoted in Hill World Turned Upside Down, p. 149.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the differences between moderate and radical Puritan ideas regarding witnessing of the spirit, see G. F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Expression, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 48-61.

⁹⁶ See Bernard Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, Chps. 6-7.

Monarchists appeared at the end of a lengthy period of "radicalisation" in English religion. It was from within these radical religious groups that the majority of English inspired prophets arose.

Inspired prophecy is closely tied to Protestant ideas of providence. English providentialism was based in the theology of John Calvin. Calvin believed that God not only created the universe; He constantly intervened in the daily workings of the world. He observed that "nothing cometh by chance, but whatsoever cometh to pass in the world, cometh by the secret providence of God."⁹⁷ Providence was the manifest and ever present relationship of the creator with his creation, and this association involved both animate beings and inanimate objects. God continually affected every creature, thing, and particle of the universe.⁹⁸ This constant attention made sense of even the most incomprehensible events. The Elizabethan Bishop Thomas Cooper (1517?-1594) noted: "That which we call fortune is nothing but the hand of God, working by causes and for causes that we know not. Chance or fortune are gods devised by man and made by our ignorance of the true almighty and everlasting God."⁹⁹ John Owen (1616-1683), Cromwell's chaplain, saw providence as "a

⁹⁷ John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, John T. MacNeil, ed., Trans. by Lewis Battles, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), Vol. I, pp. 242-243.

⁹⁸ Wilhelm Nissel, The Theology of Calvin Trans. Harold Knight, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956 [1938]), pp. 70-73.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p. 79.

straight line" which "runs through all the darkness, confusion, and disorder of the world."¹⁰⁰ Without the doctrine of providence the world collapsed into disorder, and events fell randomly at the whim of chance. Providence was certainty. This certainty did not release believers from responsibility to act in a godly manner. People needed to accept Christ and live their lives according to his precepts. For Calvin, God was the author of providence, but people could only come to an understanding of God through Christ.¹⁰¹

The coherence of providence and the interconnectedness of events tied the idea of God's intervention in earthly affairs with the "great chain". For Puritans providential circumstances formed a chain, and they would have agreed with Francis Bacon's assessment that "while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to providence and deity."¹⁰²

Seventeenth century English Puritan providential writers followed Calvin in distinguishing between God's "general" and His

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Worden, "Providence", p. 63.

¹⁰¹ Nissel, The Theology of John Calvin, pp. 70-75.

¹⁰² The Works of Francis Bacon, J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis and D. D. Heath, eds., 14 volumes, (London: 1857-1874), VI, p. 413. Although some historians have seen Puritan ideas as changing this "chain of being" into a chain of command, this is not necessarily a new notion: hierarchies inherently project a line of command. See Michael Walzer, The Revolution of Saints, pp. 160-166. Walzer's book is an attempt to chronicle the ways in which Puritan religious ideas gradually destroyed the old cosmological ideal system.

"special" providences. The former often meant His government over the natural world, and the latter concerned His dealings with people.¹⁰³ For others, "special" providence referred to God's watch over the Elect and the true church, while "general" providence indicated His dealings with humanity in general. Implied in this distinction is the idea that the Elect received special attention from the Lord.¹⁰⁴ "General" providence sometimes indicated God's intervention through second causes. General providence was thereby manifested when ordinary occurrences were sufficient to bring about the event in the proper manner. Outcomes could be discerned from the situation. In this scheme, "special" providence refers to occurrences in which the outcome could not be foreseen, or in which the causes were inexplicable. Such instances would include the recovery of a dying man when medicine had already proven insufficient, or the defeat of a large and powerful army by a smaller and weaker one.

Providences could be good or bad. Good ones were considered to be "mercies" or "deliverances"; bad ones were "judgements", or "trials", or "afflictions". Mercies were acts of divine charity which were not looked for, and usually not warranted by any particular action on the part of the individual receiving it. Judgements were always harsh, but no matter how severe a trial,

¹⁰³ John Wilkins, A Discourse concerning the Beauty of Providence (London: 1649), TT E 324 (7), p. 62.

¹⁰⁴ Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, I, p. 247; Hill, "Providence and Oliver Cromwell" in Ivan Roots, ed., Oliver Cromwell: A Profile (New York: Hill and Warner, 1973), p. 193; Worden, "Providence", p. 60.

they were never as exacting as the situation merited. Sometimes the sins which invoked the punishment were obvious, such as adultery, drunkenness, or heresy. These sins were considered to be the cause of a great deal of retributive sorrow. Not the least on this list of calamities was the Civil War itself.¹⁰⁵ Afflictions were also believed to be sent to assist a person in locating some hidden or concealed sin. This idea is illustrated by Henry Cromwell's reaction to the death of a friend into whose family he had hoped to marry. Cromwell saw this death as a chastisement for his own ambitions, God giving "a reproof particular unto myself, for placing....too much upon the consequences of this alliance."¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Ralph Josselin (1517-1683), the Puritan vicar of Earls Colne, Essex, believed that the death of one of his children indicated God's displeasure at his own "unseasonable playing at chesse".¹⁰⁷ While such connections may seem far-fetched, belief in the workings of providence is not an indication of irrationality.¹⁰⁸ Providence

¹⁰⁵ John Taylor, Mercurius pacificus (London: 1650), February, 13-27, 1650, TT E 543, 545, passim; Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, pp. 83-86; See also, John Walter and Keith Wrightson, "Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England", in Paul Slack, ed., Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order (Cambridge: Past and Present Publications, 1984), pp. 114-115.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Worden, "Providence", p. 75.

¹⁰⁷ Ralph Josselin, The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683 Alan MacFarlane, ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 114.

¹⁰⁸ In seventeenth century parlance, providence was often irrational. In this period "irrational" referred to actions or activities which were beyond the comprehension of human reason.

could act within the bounds of human reason, although at the same time it transcended human capabilities of comprehension.

In order to benefit from the lessons of providence, seventeenth century contemporaries needed to understand its workings. The ability to "read" providence was contingent upon individual facility. The humanist John Colet (1467-1519) expressed a standard truth when he stated that knowledge of God's divine plan came through "the flowing forth from God of a common spiritual and Divine light, and its gracious passage through all things, and reception by each according to each ones capacity." ¹⁰⁹ This did not mean that Christians could be passive in their reception of providence. Puritans believed that providence needed to be actively sought.¹¹⁰ The search for understanding of God's plan was most easily promoted through three methods: inward reflection, prayer, and biblical study. They did not discount, however, the possibility that God would give more physical signs of the directions he wished people to take.

For the sectaries of this period, the understanding of providence was quite similar; although one significant difference

However, such occurrences were not above God's understanding, and for this reason the term "irrational" did not have the same pejorative meaning for people in the seventeenth century as it does for us today. Irrational meant "above reason", not "counter to reason". See Hill, "Providence and Oliver Cromwell", pp. 210-211.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Worden, "Providence", p. 60.

¹¹⁰ Hill, "Providence and Oliver Cromwell", p. 198.

needs to be emphasised. They believed more firmly than did more mainstream Puritans in the direct path of revelation. In 1646 the Puritan divine Thomas Edwards (1599-1647) published Gangraena, a work in which he chronicled the "heresies" of the various religious sects of the period. Among the sectarian ideas which Edwards despised was the notion that educated clergy were not necessary. Edwards set out the belief of many of the radical sects in a more personal knowledge of God:

Every creature in the first estate of Creation was God, and every creature is God, every creature hath life and breath being an efflux from God, and shall returne into God again, be swallowed up in him as a drop is in the ocean.¹¹¹

Edwards' statement of the case is perhaps more extreme than the sectarian "extremists" he is trying to denounce, although he does expound a basic sectarian principle. The Fifth Monarchist Mary Cary's (fl.1636-1653) A Word in Season to the Kingdom of England (1647), described the belief that everyone had the power to understand and preach the word of God. The "gift of the spirit" was equally bestowed upon commoners as it was upon the elite: "[H]e makes not distinction in the exercise of this gift of the spirit, between an Officer of the church and another".¹¹² Those

¹¹¹ Thomas Edwards, Gangraena; or a Catalogue and Discovery of many Errours, Heresies and Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this Time, vented and stated in England these four last Years (London: 1646), TT E 323 (2) p. 198. For similar ideas see John Holland, The Smoke from the Bottomless Pit. or, the Doctrines of those men which call themselves ranters: or the Mad Crew (London: 1650), TT E 662 (5), I, p. 21.

¹¹² Mary Cary, A Word in Season to the Kingdom of England (London: 1647), TT E 393 (26), p. 4.

who denied that everyone could have the ability to read the spirit of God were going against God's wishes. "Now for you to silence any that do preach Iesus Christ, of what rank soever, is an endeavoring to quench the spirit: which the Lord grant you may not do."¹¹³ While Cary and other sectaries did not believe that the Bible was the "dead and killing letter"¹¹⁴, they did consider that the working of the spirit was more important than the Word. In this way they turned the mainstream Puritan idea, that the perceived Word was subordinate to the revealed Word¹¹⁵, onto its head.

During the period of the Civil War and Interregnum "Puritan providentialism enjoy[ed] its most widespread influence".¹¹⁶ Both historians and contemporaries have seen the use of providence as insincere justification for actions taken. Seventeenth century English people could defend their use of providence: "When things are clear and God's will is manifest,"

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 5. Cary's statement seems to mirror Cromwell's view of those who mocked providence: "They are without God in this world, and walk not with Him, and know not what it is to pray, or believe, and to receive returns from God, and to be spoken unto by the Spirit of God." W. C. Abbott, The Writings of Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, 4 Volumes, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1937-1947), III, pp. 591-592.

¹¹⁴ This is Calvin's description of some people's disbelief in the bible (see Umphrey Lee, The Historical Background of Early Methodist, p. 36). Many sectarian groups did see the Bible as an invalid means to understand God's wishes. For such ideas see, J. F. McGregor, "Baptists" in Reay and McGregor, eds., Radical Religion, p. 57.

¹¹⁵ Worden, "Providence", p. 91.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

stated the Puritan divine Richard Sibbes, "further deliberation is dangerous, and for the most part argues a false heart".¹¹⁷ The godly parliamentarians who defeated and executed their king in a civil war believed whole-heartedly that their victory was a sign that God was on their side and that He had sanctioned their cause. Cromwell and his supporters claimed that they had been "instruments of providence". They had executed Charles I "since providence and necessity had cast them upon it", and they had destroyed the institution of monarchy because "the providence of God has laid this title aside". Indeed, providence had "set a stamp and seal upon this government."¹¹⁸ Providence was so powerfully on the side of the Parliamentary army that the "work might have been done by children, though He was pleased to employ such worthy instruments."¹¹⁹ For such thinkers, providence had been the beacon which guided them through stormy times.

Social and economic upheaval, periodic bouts of plague, international unrest and the disasters of the Civil War, caused many English people to feel that society was disintegrating. This uneasiness was accentuated by fears introduced through a more literal interpretation of the prophetic books of the Bible. Millenarian ideas were widespread in Europe during the sixteenth

¹¹⁷ Richard Sibbes, Works, I, p. 209; quoted in Hill, "Providence and Oliver Cromwell", p. 199.

¹¹⁸ Abbott, Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, I, p. 719, and IV, p. 473.

¹¹⁹ John Owen, quoted in Worden, p. 68.

and seventeenth centuries, and many people saw their present troubles as the playing out of the prophecies of the biblical seers. This idea came out of a long tradition of millennialist activity in Europe. Millenarian movements were founded on the belief that figures of the past, either mythic or historic, would return to rule a world of bliss and plenty for a thousand years.

The Reformation had produced changes in millennial activity through new interpretations of the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation.¹²⁰ The book of Daniel contained, in one contemporary's words, "many Stupendious predictions, and interpretations of most difficult things."¹²¹ The visions involved four beasts which represented four world empires. During this period the four kingdoms were usually identified as the Babylonian, the Assyrian, the Greek, and the Roman. The last of these beasts had ten horns, one of which destroyed several of the others, bringing about the collapse of the fourth monarchy and the beginning of the rule of the saints. This rule was known as the fifth monarchy.¹²² The prophecies of the Book of Revelation are more complicated. They describe the rule of the

¹²⁰ Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, pp. 14-38; Paul Christianson, Reformers and Babylon; English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p.13-46; Katherine Firth, The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), passim.

¹²¹ Leonardus Lessius, Rawleigh his Ghost translated by A. B. [London: 1631], English Recusant Literature, vol. 349, (London: Scholar Press, 1977), p. 185.

¹²² Daniel, 7, 12, passim.

beast, a reign which was to last for 1260 days, or 42 months. During this time two beasts would persecute mankind: a two-horned beast from the earth, and a seven-headed and ten-horned beast from the sea. Two witnesses who opposed the second beast would be killed, but would rise again after 3 1/2 days. God would then begin to punish his enemies by blowing the seven trumpets, opening the seven seals and emptying the seven vials of wrath. The thousand year rule of Christ would ensue, followed by Armageddon and the final destruction of Satan.¹²³

While pre-Reformation thinkers had considered the prophetic books of the Bible as allegorical stories, in post-Reformation times they began to be seen as literal, if somewhat obscure, prophecies of future events. The shift in understanding derived from a combination of three different elements. The first is the Protestant emphasis on the letter of scripture. The Bible was literally the truth. Second, Renaissance writers had been influenced by a cyclical theory of history, and Daniel's concept of the rise and fall of a series of similar empires supported this view. Third, the prophecies seemed to make sense of the chaos which followed the Reformation. The Reformation itself had brought forth questions as to why God had allowed his people to be persecuted by the Roman Catholic church---the church of antichrist---for 1000 years.¹²⁴ Many people attempted to understand these prophecies and to prepare themselves for the

¹²³ Revelation, 7-8, 9-13, 20-22.

¹²⁴ Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, pp. 24-25.

reign of Christ.

The first millenarians in Europe following the Reformation were the disciples of Thomas Müntzer, at Zwickau, Germany. Müntzer preached that the Elect needed to rise up and annihilate the ungodly in order to prepare the world for the Second Coming.¹²⁵ In 1534 another group, supporting the Anabaptist tailor John of Leyden, took control of the city of Münster. They proclaimed Münster as the New Jerusalem, and lived communally while waiting for the end to come. Their end came in June 1535 when mercenaries in the pay of the Bishop of Munster recaptured the city and put Leyden and his followers to the sword.¹²⁶ While Müntzer and John of Leyden attempted to physically prepare for the millennium, most apocalyptic thinkers merely wished to understand the course and chronology of events.

The Marian exile John Bale (1495-1563) was the first Englishman to add an original element to the apocalyptic concept. He put forward the idea of two churches, one true and one false. He based his idea on Augustine's description of the two cities. Bale believed that a battle was being fought between the true church and the false church. This notion was greatly supported by the list of case studies presented in John Foxe's (1517-1577) Acts and Monuments (1553).¹²⁷ Foxe, another exile under Mary Tudor, used the Bible, the stories of the early fathers, and

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Paul Christianson, Reformers and Babylon, pp. 25, 36-37.

tales of the great medieval heresies to show that throughout the ages true Christians had always known the Pope to be Antichrist. A great many had become victims and martyrs in the war between truth and darkness.¹²⁸

The Presbyterian minister Thomas Brightman (1562-1607), was the first Englishman whose millenarian ideas gained widespread credence outside of England. His Latin treatise Apocalypses Apocalypsos was published in Heidelberg in 1612. Using a mixture of astrology and biblical numerology he calculated that Christ's reign would begin in 1609.¹²⁹ The 1000 years of bliss which Brightman predicted was to occur under the rule of the Presbyterian church.¹³⁰ Brightman, like many who followed after him, looked to the future for fulfillment of the promises of Reformation apologists.¹³¹ Joseph Mede (1586-1638) followed Brightman as the major millennial thinker in England. In 1627, Mede, a well-known and well-respected Cambridge theologian, published Clavis Apocayptica ex innatis et insistis Visionum charteribus for private circulation. He systematised the

¹²⁸ Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 25. In his Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), Christopher Hill shows up the changing nature of the antichrist label. It moved from being a term applied exclusively to the Pope in the mid-sixteenth century, to a broad term of disparagement for anyone opposed to a particular group's aims by the Civil War.

¹²⁹ Brightman claimed that this work had been the result of divine inspiration. See DNB, Vol. 6, p. 339, Col. A.

¹³⁰ Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 28.

¹³¹ Firth, The Apocalyptic Tradition, p. 211.

biblical prophecies, and argued that the 1000 year reign would consist of one day, the day of Judgement. He gave no firm date for the commencement of Judgement, but noted that it would begin with the ruin of Antichrist.¹³²

It was not until John Napier's (1550-1617) A plaine discovery of the whole Revelation of Saint John (1593), that an English text containing projections from the prophecies of Revelation appeared. A new surge of millenarianism gathered strength in England. The current view of Daniel and Revelation was taken to heart by people at all levels of the social scale. James I believed the popular contempt shown for the clergy to be a "signe of the latter dayes drawing on". John Spencer, groom to Lord Saye and Sele, stated in 1642: "Here you must look for a fight if ever you would come to heaven....the Lord hath told you, in the last dayes there should be terrible times". "[D]o you not already", asked Spencer, "perceive the very drops of blood begin to fall?"¹³³ John Milton wrote of Christ as the "shortly expected King".¹³⁴ Due to the breakdown in censorship which occurred during the Civil War a flood of millenarian and apocalyptic tracts began to appear. Christopher Hill estimates that as many as 80 millennial tracts were published in England between 1642 and 1649. Many more followed the execution of the

¹³² Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 29; Firth, Apocalyptic Tradition, pp. 180-203.

¹³³ Quoted in Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 312.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Ibid., p. 313.

king.¹³⁵

The rise of apocalyptic and millenarian thought is important in a number of ways. It created a polarised view of the universe which produced a catastrophic explanation for events. Most importantly for this study, it stressed a firm concern with prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy. Apocalyptic thought, Paul Christianson has explained, "accustomed people to conceive of conflict as the natural law of a sinful world and to view opponents as mortal enemies linked with supernatural evil."¹³⁶

The mixture of millenarianism, apocalypticism and radical religious fervour also helped to strengthen the idea of England as the elect nation of God. In "God's Controversy with Jacobean England", Michael McGiffert notes that the "homiletic theme of God's controversy with England had risen with the Reformation, and fifty years of preachers since John Aylmer had affirmed....that God was somehow signally English."¹³⁷ Throughout the middle of the seventeenth century England was equated with biblical Israel. England was the new chosen nation.

One of the necessary pre-conditions of the millennium was the conversion of the Jews. The shifting understanding of "Jew" shows just how strong the association between England and Israel

¹³⁵ Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution; Studies in the Interpretation of the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 313.

¹³⁶ Christianson, Reformers and Babylon, p. 5.

¹³⁷ Michael McGiffert, "God's Controversy with Jacobean England." The American Historical Review Vol. 88, No. 5, (December, 1983), pp. 1151-1174. The quote is from p. 1151.

was in contemporary thought. Increasingly, the term applied not only to those of the Jewish faith, but to believers in general.¹³⁸ In 1649 Gerrard Winstanley (c1609-1676?) dedicated his The New Law of Righteousness to "the twelve tribes of Israel that are circumcised in the heart."¹³⁹ England had enjoyed the same mercies which God had granted ancient Israel, and many people believed that if they did not repent, their increasing sins would bring God's wrath down upon them. As Michael McGiffert explains:

It was the commonplace of commonplaces---a simple matter of fact---that the Deity's "great mercies towards us Englishmen above many other nations make his judgments more heavy" because "we are like unto the children of Israel"; that, although God had "tied himself to this whole nation," the nation had broken faith with him, so that he had with it the same controversy he had prosecuted against Israel.¹⁴⁰

The idea that God would cast off the English as he had the Israelites, prompted many English people to leave England and seek a new spiritual Eden in America.¹⁴¹ It was this same fear which inspired prophets to instruct the nation in the mechanics of redemption.

The belief in God's direct action on earth and his direct

¹³⁸ See Christopher Hill, "Till the Conversion of the Jews." in Richard H. Popkin, ed., Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought, 1650-1800 (New York: E. J. Brill, 1980), pp. 12-36.

¹³⁹ Gerrard Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousness (London: 1649), Title page.

¹⁴⁰ McGiffert, "God's Controversy with Jacobean England.", pp. 1152-1153.

¹⁴¹ Hill, A Nation of Change and Novelty, p. 167.

dealings with individuals allowed for a belief in prophecy. The chaotic nature of the times permitted the de-liminalisation of prophecy. People needed to comprehend God's plans, and Puritans understood that they were to use the "means" of providence in both private and public spheres.¹⁴² In his Institutes of the Christian Religion (1559), John Calvin asserted that it "must be concluded that while the turbulent state of the world deprives us of judgement, God, by the pure light of his own righteousness and wisdom, regulates these very commotions in the most exact order and directs them to their proper end."¹⁴³ Prophets hyper-extended the public use of providential "means", and attempted to reveal to the world the "exact order" and "proper end" of things. It was the more radical idea of God's direct inspiration that led to the type of inspired prophecy which appeared in mid-seventeenth century England. This direct dealing was also at the heart of sectarian "experience", and "experience" was a necessary first step on the prophetic road.

¹⁴² N. H. Keeble, Richard Baxter, Puritan Man of Letters (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), PP. 139-142; Worden, pp. 70-71, 76.

¹⁴³ Calvin, Institutes, I, pp. xvii, 1.

Chapter III: The Mechanics of Inspired Prophecy

For people in the radical churches of mid-seventeenth century England the principal demonstration of their religious convictions was expressed in the "experience" or "testimony". These testimonies involved detailing their new-found relationship with God to their co-religionists. This form of experience and expression is closely tied to radical prophecy. For most people "experience" occurred in times of personal turmoil, and the stories of their redemption illustrate the manner in which a true understanding of God, and God's wishes, helped them through the troubled time. In a period of great social upheaval such as the mid-seventeenth century, the personally redemptive "experience" was expanded onto a national level. The Civil War and the execution of Charles I were indications that the universe was being shaken. Much of this shaking had been caused by human sins. Prophecy was an attempt by individuals to instruct their contemporaries in the methods of national redemption. In order to understand inspired prophecy it is requisite to understand the nature of testimony, and the relationship of testimony to prophecy. While the two are often considered to be separate, they are closer than is generally accepted.¹⁴⁴

Religious experience or testimony involved the sharing and

¹⁴⁴ In Perfection Proclaimed Nigel Smith makes essentially the same argument. He points out that at the very least, both are examples of divine inspiration. (p. 23)

interpreting of an individual's personal "saving" visions with his or her gathered congregation. These visions reflected an inner struggle for salvation, and allowed church members to "witness" the faith of their fellows. The Welsh preacher Vavasour Powell described experience as one of the chief methods through which God taught the people. "Experience is a Copy written by the Spirit upon the hearts of beleivers. It is one of Faiths handmaids, and attendants, and Hopes usher."¹⁴⁵ Sharing the contents of experiences with co-religionists confirmed spiritual re-birth and increased the solidarity of the group. The General Baptist Edmund Chillenden (fl.1638-1678) explained the special relationship which these testimonies gave to the gathered church:

The Churches of Christ are a holy people called out of the world by the good word of his grace, they being begotten againe, purged and cleansed from all uncleanness and unholiness, made pure by the washing of water by the word....called to be Saints....a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spirited sacrifices....a holy nation, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people....and they may not suffer any unclean or unholy person to come in and be of fellowship with them....a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.¹⁴⁶

While some may have wished to keep themselves apart from the world in all matters, others sought to foster spiritual redemption in the nation as a whole. The idea that all people could partake in the Spirit, coupled with the notion that England

¹⁴⁵ Henry Walker Spiritual Experiences of Sundry Beleevers introduction by Vavasour Powell, (London: Printed by Robert Ibbitson, 1652), TT E 1389 (1), p. A.2.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in McGregor "Baptists", p. 60.

represented God's chosen nation, pushed some radicals to instruct their neighbours in the mechanics of salvation. The Quaker leader George Fox was glad that he was "commanded to turn people to the inward light, Spirit and grace, by which all might know their salvation."¹⁴⁷ Leading people to salvation was the business of contemporary prophets.

The people of seventeenth century England viewed prophecy in a number of ways. Generally it was seen as divinely inspired utterance. A side-line of this divine inspiration is the more modern understanding of prophecy as foretelling the future. For Puritans prophecy was interpretation and exposition of scriptures. This is usually styled as "prophesying", and is one of the activities from which inspired prophecy developed. An understanding of the scriptures was essential in prophecy, and the individualistic nature of understanding which was integral to prophesying, translated well into an individual understanding of God's Word as written on specific hearts. Private perception was at the heart of both experience and prophecy.¹⁴⁸

Both of the latter involved visions which were either received privately or ecstatically. In either case those receiving the visions believed God was the direct source of their enlightenment. Those "experiencing" God gained visions of personal redemption, which generally occurred "prior to

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in William C. Braithwaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 47.

¹⁴⁸ John Smith, "Of Prophecy" in his Select Discourses (London: 1660), passim; Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, pp. 26-27.

conversion when the narrator was struggling to find God."¹⁴⁹ Visions were revealed at times of "great inner conflict and turmoil", and served as guides to end the struggle and quell the tumult.¹⁵⁰ In times of social strife and chaos such visions were extended to the country at large.¹⁵¹ As Barry Reay noted of Quaker prophets, "'those in the power and spirit of God' were expected to have visions and revelations." Spiritual re-birth would bring social regeneration.¹⁵²

Prophets were already sure of their redemption from their own testamentary experience.¹⁵³ It was because they were sure of their own salvation that they could prophesy. In their visions God, or a suitable angelic intermediary, granted special

¹⁴⁹ Dianne Sasson, The Shaker Spiritual Narrative (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983), p. 52. Experiences chronicled the discovery of "saving Grace".

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁵¹ Braithwaite, p. 151; Hugh Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 10, 163, 185; Umphrey Lee, The Historical Backgrounds of Early Methodist Enthusiasm (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), p. 43.

¹⁵² Reay, The Quakers and the English Revolution, 1985), pp. 33, 34.

¹⁵³ In his The Puritan Experience (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), O. C. Watkin's stated the Thomas Goodwin's experience allowed him to discover "the difference between common grace and saving grace". p. 84. In her defence of Elizabeth Poole, T.P. (Thomasina Pendarves?) stated: "but to you that have not so seene Christ there is a more sure word of Prophetie; for visions and revelations doe most especially confirme and strengthen those that have them." in Elizabeth Poole, An Alarum of War Given to the Army Council....Foretelling the judgements of God ready to fall upon them for disobeying the word of the Lord, in taking away the life of the KING (London: 1649), TT E 555 (23), p. 12. See also Barbour, pp. 3, 17; Braithwaite, p. 137.

knowledge with instructions to spread the Word to the people. The "audible voice", often disembodied, was a standard feature of both prophetic and testamentary visions.¹⁵⁴ In relating his experience of enlightenment from captivity into the light, Francis Howgill (1618-1667) stated that the moment he accepted God's judgement on him he heard a cry: "Just art thou oh Lord in all thy Judgements".¹⁵⁵ The experiences recorded in Spiritual Experiences (1652) also discuss the voice. "M. W." explained that "that still voyce, which a Beleever heares, as it were, from the spirit, did so inlarge my heart, that in joy and great comfort, it made me weep."¹⁵⁶ "D. M." heard a voice which informed her soul of the sufficiency of grace.¹⁵⁷ John Rogers (1627-1665) in his pamphlet Ohel, or Bethshemesh (1653) described prophecy with the Hebrew Bath Kol (soul whisperings), indicating that the "voice" was an important part of contemporary perceptions of prophecy.¹⁵⁸ The Fifth Monarchist prophet Anna Trapnel's inner voice confirmed her own redemption and clearly indicated her role as an instrument of societal deliverance:

¹⁵⁴ Sasson, Spiritual Narrative, pp. 52, 54. 59-66; Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, pp. 23-105.

¹⁵⁵ Francis Howgill, quoted in O. C. Watkins, The Puritan Experience, p. 163.

¹⁵⁶ Jessey, Spiritual Experiences, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁵⁸ John Rogers, Ohel, or Bethshemesh, A Tabernacle for the Sun: or Irenicum Evangelicum. An Idea of Church-Discipline, (London: Printed for R.I. and G. and H. Everden, 1653), TT E 717, p. 373.

Reply was made to her, that she should approve her heart to God, and for that she had been faithful in a little, she should be made the instrument of much more; for particular soules shal not benefit by her, but the Universality of Saints shall have discoveries of God through her.¹⁵⁹

Those prophets who received their visions privately preached the Word to whatever audience they could find, and often had their visions published. Those who, for whatever reasons, could not publish their visions had to content themselves with only verbally proclaiming their divinely imparted knowledge. The major difference between privately inspired prophets and ecstatically inspired prophets was the manner in which they received their visions.

"Private" visions usually occurred in dreams, although often these were "waking" dreams. These dream visions usually occurred in multiples, the prophets experiencing a series of dreams in sequence. Waking dreams sometimes occurred just prior to sleep, although most often they followed sleep in which other dream-visions had transpired. Contemporary ideas on dreaming directly equated visions and dreams, and Puritans saw no purpose in dreams unless they were taken to express some hidden message or portent.¹⁶⁰ The Presbyterian minister Philip Goodwin (d.1669)

¹⁵⁹ Anna Trapnel, Strange and Wonderful Newes from White-Hall; or, The Mighty Visions Proceeding from Mistris Anna Trapnel (London: Printed for Robert Sale, 1649), TT E 224 (3), p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ The idea that a dream needed a visionary element to qualify as a dream was put forward by a long line of theologians. See Nigel Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, pp. 74-78. In this they would have followed Plato, who in his Timaeus stated: "No man in his wits attained prophetic truth and inspiration, but when he

developed a "sliding scale" for dreams with the "visions of the night" falling along a demarcated line running from good to bad. According to Goodwin, waking life was social, while the world of dreams was a discrete, private realm of supernatural discovery.¹⁶¹ The majority of Puritans saw dreams as visionary vehicles. Radical religious groups put more stock in the direct revelatory nature of dreams, and applied these revelations to society at large.¹⁶² Still, the actual act of dreaming was a private matter.

Ecstatic prophets usually obtained the Word publicly, and these insights were accompanied by strange behaviour. After examining several Ranter prophets, Thomas Hubbert, a Middlesex Justice of the Peace, described the manner in which they received God's word. Hubbert stated that they were inspired while "clapping their hands, and filliping with their fingers, casting themselves downe upon the ground, and singing, and using strange

receives the inspired word, either his intelligence is enthralled in sleep, or he is demented by some distemper or possession." (p. 71) Quoted in Umphrey Lee, The Historical Background of Early Methodist Enthusiasm, p. 14.

¹⁶¹ Philip Goodwin, The Mystery of Dreams, Historically Discoursed (London: Printed by A.M. for Francis Tryton, 1658), TT E 1576, passim.

¹⁶² For contemporary "dream theory" see Meric Causabon, A Treatise of ENTHUSIASME, as it is an Effect of Nature; but is Mistaken by many for either Divine Inspiration or Diabolically Possession [London: 1654] Introduction by Paul J. Korshin, (Gainesville Florida: Scholars Press Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970), passim.; Philip Goodwin, The Mystery of Dreames, Historically Discovered, passim.; See also Nigel Smith, • Perfection Proclaimed, pp. 73-104.

postures."¹⁶³ Such "gestures" and "strange postures" were widespread, and noted for most other radical groups as well.¹⁶⁴ These ecstatic antics often drew large crowds, who would subsequently be exposed to the prophet's message. Many historians see these actions as merely a show employed to draw crowds. Keith Thomas argues this point in Religion and the Decline of Magic, when describing the actions of female prophets. He states:

The fasting and trances which were a common preliminary to such utterances helped to draw attention to the prophetess; properly publicized, they would ensure that her pronouncement would be scrutinized by an altogether larger audience than she might otherwise have hoped to command.¹⁶⁵

Doubtless the "show" had this effect, but historians should not be too quick to deny the sincerity of the actions. Studies of the human endorphin system have shown that in stress situations these hormones can be excreted, resulting in hallucinogenic effects as powerful as those induced by LSD. In a society which had strong belief in the possibility of possession, such "endorphin fits" would likely be classified as

¹⁶³ Quoted in John Taylor, Ranthers of Bothe Sexes, Male and Female being thirteen or more, taken and imprisioned in the Gate-House at Westminster, and in the New Prison at Clerken Well (London: Printed for John Hammon, 1651), TT E 629 (15), p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, Gangraena, passim.; Clarke Garret, Spirit Possession and Popular Religion (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), passim.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p. 139.

inspiration.¹⁶⁶ It should also be noted that the fasting, lack of sleep, and chanting of seventeenth century prophets could similarly cause hallucinations, and that these hallucinations could be taken as inspiration. Eastern mystics still employ such techniques in order to contact the astral plane. These actions also mirrored the gestures of the biblical prophets. While the taking on of these stigmata was undoubtedly the result of a knowledge of their biblical forerunners, there is scant evidence to support the assumption that such external shows of prophecy were contrived.

The fact that these prophets were influenced by their knowledge of the behaviour of their biblical forerunners is undeniable. In 1650, Nathaniel Holmes (1599-1678), a divine who often wrote against prophets and prophecy of all kinds, noted: "We read in the Scriptures, and in the Histories, what Madd fits the Diviners had, crying out, and clamouring like frenzie."¹⁶⁷ While Holmes denied the honesty of such actions, he understood that the gestures in themselves were messages. The physical contortions of the prophets constituted visible parables of the

¹⁶⁶ I. M. Lewis, Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession 2nd edition (New York: The Viking Press, 1989), p. 34.

¹⁶⁷ Nathaniel Holmes, Daemonology and Theology, The First the Malady, the Second the Remedy (London: Printed by Thomas Roycroft for John Martin and John Ridly, 1650), TT E 1641 (2), p. 49. For similar views see Lee, The Historical Background, p. 19; Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, pp. 18, 66.

verbal communications.¹⁶⁸ While these divine convulsions may have been indecipherable for many viewers, God's messengers had other methods of physically disclosing the Word. The Quaker prophet and preacher William Simpson (1627?-1671) serves as a good example. In 1659 Simpson exhorted the people to repent their sins, dismantle the Protectorate and return monarchy. He imparted these instructions while "passing naked through the street." His physical nudity symbolised the spiritual denudation of the people. When dressed, Simpson often wore sackcloth, the standard garb of the penitent. As well, he blackened his face "as a type of the moral blackness that prevailed" in England.¹⁶⁹ Because of its startling nature, "Going naked as a Sign" may have lost some its metaphorical impact.¹⁷⁰ Even if the physical message was misunderstood, such behaviour still served an important purpose. It was necessary for a prophet to display the proper stigmata if they were to be accepted as genuine. When defending Anna Trapnel from charges of imposture, John Proud and Caleb Ingold declared that her trances were a physical sign of God's presence within her:

Whereby God would seem as by a visible Sign to manifest that the Invisible God dwells in her, and would put to silence the Ignorance, Pride and Rage of flesh against

¹⁶⁸ Nigel Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, pp. 18, 31, 35, 55, 67.

¹⁶⁹ DNB, Vol. 52, p. 280. See Reay, Quakers, pp. 36-37, for similar examples.

¹⁷⁰ Reay, Quakers, p. 136, n. 29.

the Presence and power of God in her.¹⁷¹

While the strange behaviour of prophets could be taken as signs of irrationality, the common experience of the lower orders likely pre-disposed them to accept more readily the "irrational" as divinely inspired. Whether the actions of contemporary prophets were conscious and cynical or unconscious and genuine will likely remain a matter of debate. However, the number of claims to inspiration suggest their genuine nature. As Nigel Smith explains in Perfection Proclaimed (1989):

We do not have sufficient evidence to tell whether these dreams and visions really happened or not, except that they were reported in considerable quantity, and we have certain common characteristics which cannot be attributed simply to literary convention or proselytizing cynicism.¹⁷²

Many contemporaries believed that inspiration came not from God, but from Satan. In his 1650 pamphlet Daemonologie and Theology, Nathaniel Holmes stated that prophets:

will pretend to be on Gods side, and they will be really in the Devils side....We see in these dayes, that men wil pretend to be Preachers, and wil in publicke deliver most blasphemous, and impious licentiousnesse, to the end that they may be followed and admired of the multitude which generally (saith Christ) goe the broad way.¹⁷³

John Taylor (1580-1653), the water poet, expressed a similar view in his pamphlet Ranters of Both Sexes (1651), stating that the

¹⁷¹ Trapnel, A Legacy for Saints, (London: 1654), TT E 806 (1), p. 21.

¹⁷² Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 93. See Diane Sasson Spiritual Narrative, p. 44, for a similar view.

¹⁷³ Holmes, Daemonologie and Theology, p. 189. See also pp. 190-206.

"mad delicate doctrine" of these people was more likely inspired by devils than by angels.¹⁷⁴ Many people confessed that they had experienced visions sent by Satan. Anna Trapnel believed her original visions to have been diabolically inspired. This realisation came from the content of the revelations, in which she had been exhorted to commit suicide. God forbade suicide, and since He could not be contrary to Himself, He would not order it. Trapnel's satanic contact persisted until her inner voice put her on the true path. The voice which she "could not contradict" informed her of her new relationship with Christ: "Christ is thine and thou art Christs".¹⁷⁵ Sarah Wight, John Rogers, and a plethora of others all had similar experiences. Diabolical suicidal temptation was a common element in the experiences collected by Rogers, Henry Walker and Henry Jessey (1601-1665).¹⁷⁶

Contemporaries also drew connections between prophecy, witchcraft, and lunacy. I. Barnes, in the 1619 pamphlet The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillipa Flower listed seven categories of witches, two of which could apply to inspired prophets. These were the Geomantici, who

¹⁷⁴ Taylor, Ranters of Bothe Sexes, pp. 5-6. The quote is from page 5.

¹⁷⁵ Trapnel, The Legacy for Saints, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷⁶ Rogers, Ohel, or Bethshemesh, passim.; Walker, ed., Spiritually Experiences, passim.; Henry Jessey, ed., The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced by the spirit of Grace, In an Empty Nothing Creature, viz., Mrs. Sarah Wight (London: Printed by J. M. for Henry Cripps, Lodowick Lloyd and Livewell Chapmen: 1652), 6th edition, TT E 1307 (2), passim.

conversed with spirits, and the Ventriliqui, who spoke "with hollow voices as if they were possessed."¹⁷⁷ Studies of Quakers, Baptists, Shakers, and other sectarian groups show that they were often labelled as witches, in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁷⁸ The astrologer and physician Richard Napier's (1559-1634) "psychiatric" casebooks are full of references to those who had received visions and were therefore considered insane.¹⁷⁹ Many of his contemporaries agreed, espousing the belief that "enthusiasm and madness are but the same thing in different languages."¹⁸⁰ Robert Burton (1577-1640) noted in his Anatomy of Melancholy (1621):

Great Precisions of mean condition and very illiterate, [for the] most part by a preposterous zeal, fasting, meditation, melancholy, are brought into those gross errors and inconveniences....they are Certainly far gone with melancholy, if not quite mad, and have more need of helebore than those that are in Bedlam.¹⁸¹

In Daemonology and Theology, Nathaniel Holmes described prophetic

¹⁷⁷ I. Barnes, The Wonderfull Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillipa Flower (English Experience Series, #517, [London: 1619]), p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Reay, Quakers, pp. 68-71, 96, 150, n.44; Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 53;

¹⁷⁹ Michael MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), passim.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁸¹ Robert Burton, The Anatomie of Melancholy, What it is. With all the Kindes, Causes, Symptoms, Prognostickes, and Severall Cures (Oxford: Printed by John Littlefield and James Short, 1641, [1621]), Vol. 1, p. 377.

madness as the result of the Devil "stirring up melancholy".¹⁸²

The most exhaustive contemporary work on enthusiasm was Meric Causabon's A Treatise concerning ENTHUSIASME (1655). His main purpose was not to determine whether enthusiasm was possible, but rather to show that it had natural, and not supernatural, causes: "My bussinesse therefore shal be, as by examples of all professions in all ages, to shew how men have been very prone upon some grounds of nature, producing some extraordinary though not supernaturall effects; really, not hypocritically, but yet falsely and erroneously, to deem themselves divinely inspired".¹⁸³ He did not dismiss the possibility of inspiration merely because people sometimes acted the part for their own gain. Inspiration was possible, but it worked through naturally explainable causes, and not through the inexplicable designs of God.¹⁸⁴

The visionaries themselves would have despised Causabon's attempt to rationalise their inspiration. In 1646 an anonymous pamphleteer declared that God's "Wayes are Wonderfull, Unsearchable, (His Counsell is in Himself;) and of himself, Our God is neer at hand".¹⁸⁵ However, the difference between the two schemes is one more of labels than of substance. Causabon made a

¹⁸² Holmes, Daemonologie and Theology, p. 23.

¹⁸³ Meric Causabon, A Treatise concerning ENTHUSIASME, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 35, 62-83.

¹⁸⁵ Anonymous, Prophecies the Sept 15 1645 (London: 1646), TT E 339 (10), p. 5.

distinction between "a naturall power of the intellectus", which was intrinsic to the body, and the "intelligentia" which was extrinsic. It was the first operating upon the second which brought on inspiration. Radical religionists made the distinction between their physical and intellectual bodies, and the indwelling God which was both above and below their own consciousness.¹⁸⁶ The separation between flesh and spirit was differentiated in sectarian writing through the use of italics, and the distinguishing letters "I" and "J", where "I" is the individual and "J" is the indwelling God.¹⁸⁷

Redemption and regeneration through a personal "experience" with God was the requisite precursor to prophecy. This was so whether or not the prophet was the member of a sect, or merely an inspired individual. The details of the experiences of sectarians are decidedly more religious than those of their co-prophets from outside the sects. They are, however, bound together in experience: both groups accepted that they had been personally touched by God, and that through this contact they were sanctioned and required to spread the Word of God. In essence prophecy was a continuous experience, and it was

¹⁸⁶ Causabon, p. 47; Reay, Quakers, pp. 33, 35-36, 42; Smith, pp. 15, 18, 85. In The Quakers in Puritan England, Hugh Barbour notes a Quaker book used for teaching children which explains the difference in this way: "Q: Father, how may I know a thought and an imagination from the Light? A: Child, the Light discovers them and makes them manifest, which cometh from Him by whom the World was made, which Light was before the thoughts were, and if the Light be hearkened to, the thoughts and imaginations shall not lodge within thee." (p. 176)

¹⁸⁷ Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, pp. 61-66.

experience which the prophet shared with the nation at large. Prophecy developed within religiously turbulent times, and directly out of less "radical" religious avenues. It was the child of a union between "providence" and "experience", and involved pushing the public limits of these activities to the extreme. The redemptive role of God's earthly messengers will be better understood after examining some of these prophets and their prophecies.

Chapter IV: Prophets and Prophecies, Part I:
Eleanor Davis, Elizabeth Poole, George Foster, and Anna Trapnel

Before discussing the works of these particular prophets, it is necessary to make some comment on prophets in general. The majority of inspired prophets in mid-seventeenth century England came from the lower strata of society. Because of this, any heterodox opinions they espoused were considered dangerous by the ruling elite. When the message was unwelcome, it was easier to label the prophets as frauds or lunatics, than it was to accept the consequences of their inspiration. Many prophets were put down by their social superiors for stepping out of their proper station. One pamphleteer, speaking of the great number of tailors who had taken to preaching for the sects, advised them: "Prithee good Mr. Stich keep thy calling, and hereafter cut thy coat according to thy cloth."¹⁸⁸ Such admonitions did not keep people from paying heed to the messages of these preachers and prophets.

Women made up a large number of seventeenth century inspired prophets, and in all likelihood filled the vast majority of posts in the heavenly messenger service. In most radical religious groups, both in England and on the continent, women formed the

¹⁸⁸ Anonymous, The Mad Merry Merlin: or, The Black Almanac (London: Printed for G. H., 1653), TT E 725 (1), p. 1. For similar thoughts see Keith Lindly, "London and popular freedom in the 1640's" in M. Tolmie, The Triumph of the Saints (1977), pp. 111-15, and Barbour, The Quakers, pp. 21-24.

bulk of early converts. Whether they sought emancipation from patriarchal control, or from the constraints of poverty is unclear.¹⁸⁹ This is not to say that the prophetic role was exclusive to women and the poor. Prophets came from all walks of life and levels of society. Age, sex, and social status were not barriers to the office of heavenly messenger, and period writings show all manner of people engaging in the activity.

These prophets set out their revelations in pamphlets which ranged in length from a few pages to several hundred. Many religious and political discussions grew into full-fledged pamphlet wars during this period. The attacks and counter-attacks in these works often obscured the arguments of the combatants.¹⁹⁰ This is not the case with prophets. They seldom mentioned other prophets in their pamphlets. Arise Evans was the only visionary examined for this thesis who both used and attacked the prophecies of others. It may be that the common claim to "God in everyone" made it impossible for prophets to refute rival claims.

Seventeenth century contemporaries saw a large number of prophets deliver the word of God. The exact extent of prophetic influence can never be truly gauged, however, certain incidents

¹⁸⁹ See Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", Past and Present, No. 13 (1958), pp. 42-46; Mack, "Women as Prophets During the English Civil War." passim., and "The Prophet and Her Audience: Gender and Knowledge in the World Turned Upside Down." passim.

¹⁹⁰ See H. M. Long, "'Appearance into Publique Light'", pp. 13-56 for a discussion of this type of pamphlet war.

can be given which indicate that these messengers reached a fairly large audience. In 1628 Jane Hawkins, a poor pedlar from a village outside the city of Linclon, fell into a trance. She remained in trance for three days and managed in that time to gather an audience of over three hundred. Her prophecies were cut short by the actions of Bishop Williams of Lincoln who feared that her words were gaining too large an audience and being given too much credence.¹⁹¹ Nathaniel Holmes wrote in 1653 that such "vain prophets" were "followed and admired of the multitude".¹⁹² Similarly, Marchamont Needham warned Oliver Cromwell in 1654 that Anna Trapnel was drawing "multitudes" to her cell in Bridewell to hear her preach.¹⁹³ All five of the period newsbooks examined for this thesis contained information on prophets. The "meeting" between Oliver Cromwell and the Welsh prophet Arise Evans noted in the newsbook The Faithful Scout (see below) assumes the reader's familiarity with Evans. The printing of pamphlets and and the public broadcasting of prophecies doubtless assured that a wide audience would at least be exposed to prophetic messages. The large amount of anti-prophetic literature produced in this period also points to the fact that inspired prophets were seen as a significant threat.

¹⁹¹ Calendar of State Papers, Protectorate, [CSP, PRO, Chas I], 1628-1629, p. 348.

¹⁹² Nathaniel Holmes, Daemonologie and Theooogie, p. 189.

¹⁹³ Marchamont Needham to Oliver Cromwell, February 7, 1654, Calendar of State Papers, Protectorate [CSP, PRO], 1654, p. 285.

What follows is an examination of a cross-section of prophets and prophecies. These divine messengers and their texts were examined independently, although undoubtedly most prophets were familiar with the works of others. By discussing their prophecies separately the coherency of their ideas can be more easily discerned.

* * * * *

Lady Eleanor Davis (1590-1652?):

One of the best known prophets of this period was the Lady Eleanor Davis. Davis was the daughter of George Touchet, Baron Audeley, and Earl of Castlehaven. She was married twice. Her first husband was Sir John Davis (Davies), the Attorney General of Ireland, whom she married in 1609. By the 1620's she began having visions. In 1623 she forecast unpleasant futures for the wife and children of a certain man named Brooke. While he threatened Davis because of this prophecy, he apparently had little power to cause her any real pains for it.¹⁹⁴ She did not fare so well when her visions touched upon people of more power. Her marriage was relatively happy until 1625, when Lady Eleanor received this inspired message: "There is nineteen and a half years to the Judgement Day, and you as the Meeke Virgin."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ _____ Brooke to Lady Davis, n.d., CSP, DOM, Chas I, 1619-1623, p. 400 Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller, eds., The Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals 3 Volumes, (New York: Harper Press, 1984), indicates the beginnings of Davis's prophetic career was the result of a meeting with a deaf and dumb boy fortuneteller in 1625. (Vol. I, p. 216, Col. A.) Brooke's letter makes clear that her predictions had begun before this date.

¹⁹⁵ CSP, DOM, Chas I, Vol. 6, 1633-1634, p. 345.

She began to equate Charles I with Antichrist, and indicated that he ruled over a new Babylon. Sir John frowned upon her new-found inspiration, and threw her prophecies into the fire. In retaliation Lady Eleanor predicted his death within a year, and began to wear black to mourn his imminent demise. Her notoriety as a true seer was enhanced when he died of apoplexy three weeks later.

Three months after Sir John's death Lady Eleanor remarried. Her new husband, Sir Archibald Douglas, also frowned upon her involvement in prophecy, although he himself took up numerological divination later in his life.¹⁹⁶ Her acceptance as a prophet was further enhanced in 1628 by the correct prediction of the death of the Duke of Buckingham.¹⁹⁷ In 1633 she published predictions of the bloody downfall of Charles I. This revelation was published in Amsterdam, and Davis smuggled it into England for domestic circulation. An English printing did not appear until 1649. She was arrested for the Amsterdam printing shortly after its first appearance in England, and fined £3,000.¹⁹⁸ She was placed in Bedlam, and later released. In

¹⁹⁶ Douglas died in 1644. Biographical Dictionary, Vol. I, p. 216. Col. B.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ It is unlikely that Davis ever paid this exorbitant fine. She apparently refused to acknowledge her crime, and claimed that she could not afford the price. The payment of the fine was carried over from court to court until 1640 (CSP, DOM, Chas I Vol. 7, 1634-1635, p. 176; Vol. 8, 1635, p. 230; Vol 10, 1636-1637, p. 525; Vol. 12 1637-1638, p. 554; Vol. 15, 1639-1640, p. 545, Vol. 16, 1640, p. 398) In 1641 she is listed as owing £ 2000. Whether this is a new fine for an unknown offence, or

1634 she found herself in trouble once again, this time for predicting the death of Archbishop William Laud. According to Davis, Laud was nothing more than the Beast's right hand, and he would be destroyed with the Antichrist.¹⁹⁹ By implication this prophecy cast a shadow on the King as well. She was re-arrested and placed in Bridewell. Her books were ordered to be publicly burned, an act which Davis witnessed from the window of her cell.²⁰⁰ Due to the intervention of the King's sister, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, she was eventually released in 1636.²⁰¹

In 1638 she was forcibly ejected from Lichfield Cathedral. Davis had been brought to the Cathedral by two local women, Marie Noble and Susan Walker. She sat in the church, continually changing seats, until she had taken up position on the Bishop's throne. Upon being told to remove herself from the episcopal place Davis proclaimed that she was both "primate and metropolitan" and had a right to the seat. She later smeared the church hangings with a mixture of "water, tar, and other filthy

represents the remainder of her original 1633 fine is unclear. (CSP, DOM, Chas I Vol 17, 1640-1641, p. 378.)

¹⁹⁹ CSP, DOM, Chas I, Vol. 6, 1633-1634, p. 266. Davis indicated that the number of Laud's name added up to 666, the number of the Beast.

²⁰⁰ CSP, DOM, Chas I, 1633, p. 346.

²⁰¹ Elizabeth of Bohemia to Charles I, October 28, 1633, CSP, DOM, Chas I, 1633, p. 261; Book of Acts of the Court of High Commission, Fol. 2b, February, 1633-34, CSP, DOM, Chas I, 1633, p. 480; September 12/22, 1633, CSP, DOM, Chas, I, 1625-1649, Addenda, p. 458.

things". She claimed the mixture was "holy water", and that she sought to expunge the house of God of the trappings of Antichrist.²⁰² She frequently interrupted church services by shouting down ministers. She was in and out of Bedlam during the late 1630's, and her behaviour became increasingly unpredictable. In 1639 she forecast that the city of London would be destroyed by fire before Easter. Her prediction "proved, like herself, very false", although it created a minor panic, especially when a series of damaging fires hit the city in the weeks before Easter. One contemporary described Davis at this time as being "a long time in Bedlam"; and in Bedlam, he thought, "she must end her days."²⁰³ She was placed in the Tower sometime in early 1640 for an unknown offence, "the particular mention whereof we [the Council] think fitter to suppress". She was released from the Tower in September, 1640 after the intervention of her son-in-law, Ferdinando, Lord Hastings.²⁰⁴

At the outbreak of the Civil War her position changed somewhat. Her past successes indicated her true inspiration, and she found some support in a parliamentary regime which figured favourably in her prophecies. Her 1633 prediction of Charles I's eventual destruction was re-issued by parliamentary supporters in 1649, along with a gloss which indicated how certain prophetic

²⁰² CSP, DOM, Chas I , Vol. 12, 1637-1638, pp. 219.

²⁰³ Thomas Smith to Sir John Pennington, May, 1639, CSP DOM ChasI, Vol. 13, 1638-1639, p. 620.

²⁰⁴ Council to Ferdinando Lord Hastings, September 7, 1640, CSP, DOM, ChasI Vol. 17, 1640-1641, p. 21.

passages had proven correct. She was acquainted with Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers, some of whom she hired in 1650 to thresh her wheat.²⁰⁵ She published several pamphlets between 1642 and her death in 1652.

Davis's prophecies were the result of a mixture of inspiration, biblical exegesis, and numerology. She rarely discussed her actual visions, preferring to present their interpretations with biblical annotations. It is often difficult to grasp the inspired origins of her visions. Her inspiration is indicated from both the internal evidence in her pamphlets and the charges brought against her for her 1633 prophecy concerning Charles I. According to Davis, her prophecies were imparted to her by an audible voice, and her pamphlets are really an exposition of the words of this voice, not a re-telling in her own terms.²⁰⁶ Christine Berg and Philipa Berry note in their article "'Spiritual Whoredom': Female Prophets in the Seventeenth Century" (1981), that Davis's personality is subsumed in the pamphlet to the point where "subjectivity almost completely disappears."²⁰⁷ She presented the Word to the public as it had been presented to her. The "voice" made all things understandable:

²⁰⁵ Biographical Dictionary, Vol I, p. 216, Col. B; Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 202.

²⁰⁶ Christine Berg and Philipa Berry, "'Spiritual Whoredom': An Essay on Female Prophets in the Seventeenth Century." in Francis Barker, ed., 1642: Literature and Power in Seventeenth Century England (Essex: 1981), pp. 39-54 (pp. 46-47)

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

....there is nothing so secret, that shall not bee discovered: And the Clearnesse now of these future things, being come to passe, with the rest shortly to be accomplished, Begets and creates this Boldresse [sic] in Mee, to dissolve or breake this precious Ivory-Box of Times and Seasons Mistery: sharing of the last day at hand, the happy time of the end."²⁰⁸

While the "voice" may have made everything understandable for Davis, it is often difficult to discern her message amid her jumble of "free expression".²⁰⁹ The charges brought against Davis for publishing "fanatical pamphlets" in 1633 also show the inspired source of her knowledge. The charges state that she claimed "to be a Prophetess, falsely pretending to have receiv'd certain Revelations from God, and had compil'd certain Books of such her fictions."²¹⁰

Her 1633 predictions took the form of a somewhat ambiguous rhyming verse. The presage of the King's death appeared in the following stanza taken from the 1649 reprint:

A hand appears, lo in his sight,
as he did drink the wine,
Upon the wall against the light
it wrote about a line.
In preference of his numerous Peers,
not see an hour full,
In loyns nor knees had he no might,

²⁰⁸ Eleanor Davis, Prophecies of the Last Day (London: 1642), pp. 3-4. Quoted in Berry and Berg, "Spiritual Whoredom", p. 45.

²⁰⁹ Robert Zaller and Richard Greaves describe Davis's pamphlets as being "filled with obscure images and ecstatic expressions." Biographical Dicitonary, Vol. I, p. 216, Col. B.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 46.

chang'd as gastly skull.²¹¹

Her description of the actual execution is fairly accurate,
although this may be the case of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Sure as is thy Banqueting house,
Where all that come may view
The vessells of my God are brought,
the palm salutes these know
Herewith; for them profan'd by thou
threaten the fatal blow.²¹²

The margins of the 1649 version contain a gloss upon the
prophecy, in which the editor was at great pains to point out the
accuracy of Davis' visions. According to this editor Davis not
only predicted the death of Charles I, but she also described the
downfall of Archbishop Laud, and the dismembering of the
episcopal church. She described the Court of High Justice that
would try the King, and revealed the eventual abolition of
monarchy.²¹³

Davis' 1643 pamphlet A Star to the Wise is a millennial
tract which speaks of a future "Golden Age". Davis claimed this
would be her last prophecy "directed unto our Nation",²¹⁴
although this did not prove to be the case. She equated Charles
I directly with Antichrist, and claimed that his days were
numbered. His government was one of the "seven heads, and Ten

²¹¹ Eleanor Davis, Strange and Wonderfull Prophecies of the
Lady Eleanor Davis (London: 1649 [Amsterdam: 1630]), TT E 571
(28), p. 1.

²¹² Ibid., p. 3.

²¹³ Ibid., passim.

²¹⁴ Eleanor Davis, A Star to the Wise (London: 1643), TT E
76 (28), p. A2.

horns" of the beast. Through the use of numerology she discovered that the 1640's would see the downfall of Antichrist.²¹⁵ Davis also likened Charles I to the Roman emperor Augustus, and she was helped in the analogy by the unpopular collection of ship money. As Augustus was king when Christ first came to earth, Augustus was to be king when he returned:

[I]n Augustus his Taxin dayes, there sending forth his Decrees to have all the world Taxt that second Ceasar, when the second person in Trinity, came to pay the Ransome of all; Also in his Raigh, those Taxing dayes of his, not over the world unknown: These Burthens never so imposed, befor He the second of Great Britains Monarchy: Likewise revealed the second coming of our Lord, when that time comes to passe: and good will towards Men, Peace on Earth.²¹⁶

She ends with a postscript taken from Revelation: "And here The Cup none debarred of it: He that is a thrift Let him Come."²¹⁷ The people of England needed to drink from the Cup of the Lord to prepare for the coming of Christ. None were debarred from this drinking. If the people followed the advice of God's prophet they would achieve spiritual redemption.

She expressed similar views in Samson's Legacie (1643), in which she compared Charles I to Samson, noting that both had been brought low by women: Samson by Delilah, and Charles I by Henrietta Maria.²¹⁸ In Davis' view the King had "Certainly

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

²¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

²¹⁸ Eleanor Davis, Samson's Legacie (London: 1643), TT E 96 (19), pp. 1-5.

manifested as great Imbecillitie in subjecting himselfe to a
Womans waywardnesse, therewith carryed away so and
transported."²¹⁹ In particular, his popish wife led him down the
path of Arminianism. Discussing Charles I's misuse of religion,
and his attempt to bind true religion with the chains of
Arminianism, she stated:

He that no Chaines could binde him (Marke Evangelist
the 5th) That had been often bound with fetters and
with Chaines pluck'd assunder by him. And fetters
broken in pieces, neither could by any man be tamed; as
much to say, neither Oath, nor Word, or promise
availing, or any reason of force to persuade with Him,
as the Holy Ghost speaking plaine: by that adjuring in
Gods Name; and asking his Name too, saying LEGION, for
they were many, who spoke not with the Left:
Neverthesse, not more fierce than fearfull of the
Lords coming, this man wounding himself thus.²²⁰

The King had wounded himself (and his cause) by attempting to
impose false religion on the legion of true believers in England.
He had bound himself to destruction, despite the numerous words,
oaths and promises which had been used to persuade him of the
error of his ways. Davis also warned her readers to be wary of
underhand dealings, and to be steadfast in the coming days of
"bleeding" and "Plundering" and "Intolerable Thefts". If the
people kept to the true path, and rejected the King's false
worship, they would come to the Kingdom of Heaven.²²¹ She set
out a list of anagrams which showed how current events were

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 6. See pages 1-6 for a description of Samson,
and pages 7-10 for a comparison with Charles I.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 4.

following the biblical prophecies.²²² There was no earthly cure for the distemper of the times; the only remedy was supernatural and spiritual. In To the Most Honourable High Court of Parliament (1643) she noted that the time for action was short, and that the only possible effective action was to turn to the Lord.

Now when Time so precious is with your Lordships: under the Sunne there is nothing but a super naturall Course to be taken, Touching the Care of such unnaturall condition'd Times: the Almightye his Word the only Balme then, and Soveraigne remedy when ye have tryd all.²²³

In 1644 Davis issued another prophetic plea for citizens to follow the path of redemption. She prefaced her The Restitution of Reprobates with a passage from Malac. 3: "Behold I will send my messenger."²²⁴ According to Davis, she had been directed by God to impart "misticall words" of comfort to all the people of England. All were reprobates, and needed to find salvation. It was the only way to ensure safe passage through the troubled times the country was experiencing. Most of the pamphlet is taken up with an exposition of signs by which people could gauge the approach of the second coming. As was her usual custom, Davis provided a biblical timetable and showed how current events

²²² Ibid., pp. 21-24.

²²³ Eleanor Davis, To the Most Honourable High Court of Parliament (London: 1643), TT E 96 (19-19#), pp. 1-2. She made much the same plea in her Before the Lords Second Coming (London: 1650), TT E 616 (11), p. 3.

²²⁴ Eleanor Davis, The Restitution of Reprobates, (London: 1644), TT E 3 (4), title page.

fitted into the chronology provided by the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.²²⁵ She ended her pamphlet with a plea for God to increase the faith of the people that they might come to a better knowledge of Him, and thereby ensure the safety of their souls in the turbulent times to come.²²⁶

All of Davis' pamphlets were concerned with the biblical chronology of the prophecies of Daniel, and of John in Revelation. Her inspiration allowed her to "dissolve and breake this precious Ivory-Box of Times and Seasons Mistery". Her spiritual verses, and strange, and often incomprehensible "scripture language", indicated both the power of God which filled her, and the difficulty of comprehending the awesome power of the deity. In Sions Lamentation (1649), Davis expressed her belief that the spirit of prophecy exhibited in the bible had continued throughout history, and that her inspiration, and that of numerous of her contemporaries, was an indication of this.²²⁷

Her role was a traditional one, although it had always been liminal in times of peace and security. The turbulent nature of the times made it imperative that she attempt to inform the nation concerning the course of cosmic events, and how these events were both reflected in, and affected by, earthly activities. She saw Charles I as an impediment to national

²²⁵ Ibid., pp. 10-14.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

²²⁷ Eleanor Davis, Sions Lamentation, (London: 1649), pp. 5-6. Noted in Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 75.

salvation. He was the servant of the Beast, and had abused his position by attempting to impose false worship on the people of England. She used her personal inspiration, increased through knowledge of the Bible, the use of anagrams and numerology, to attempt to redeem England in the face of the second coming of Christ. The great difficulty of her task, and the social, legal, and physical obstacles which stood in her way did not keep her from carrying out the heavenly mission with which she was charged.

Elizabeth Poole (fl.1648-1649):

After Charles I's final defeat and capture in 1648, Elizabeth Poole met with the General Council of the Army to present a vision concerning his fate.²²⁸ Little is known about her except what can be discovered in her pamphlets. Poole was probably the daughter of Robert Poole, who had "criticised William Kiffin in 1645 for seducing [his] daughter and servants into Particular Baptist errors."²²⁹ She was a member of Kiffin's Baptist congregation until 1649, when she was renounced by both Kiffin and his followers. She was acquainted with the evangelist John Pendarves (1623-1656) and his wife Thomasina. It was likely Thomasina Pendarves who criticised Kiffin's church for

²²⁸ Elizabeth Poole, A Vision: Wherein is manifested the disease and cure of the Kingdome being the summe of what was Delivered to the Generall Council of the Army, Decem. 29, 1648 (London: 1648), TT E 537 (24).

²²⁹ Biographical Dictionary, Vol. III, p. 49, Col. A.

Poole's rejection, and endorsed her 1649 pamphlet An Alarum of War.²³⁰ Poole's activities are unknown after the publication of this work.

She met with the army council on two occasions: December 29, 1648 and January 4, 1649. She was likely introduced into the Council by Ireton or Cromwell, and historians have tended to view her as a prophetic dupe used to further their political ends.²³¹ Cromwell and Ireton disassociated themselves from her when they found that she was against the execution of the King, and they relied on Kiffin and his congregation to expose the falseness of her inspiration.²³² Poole's metaphorical vision involved a woman "crooked, sick, weak and temper-sett in bodye". This woman symbolised England. Through his tyranny and abuse Charles I, as both husband and father to the nation, had caused her distempers.²³³ The King's guilt was certain, but Parliament had no right to punish him. He could be brought to trial, but only so that he might "be convicted in his conscience". No earthly power had the authority to punish a king. Similarly a husband or father could not be punished, although many radicals felt they

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 224; Maurice Ashley, Cromwell, the Conservative Dictator (London: Academy Books, 1937), pp. 134-135; David Underdown, Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 183. Historians have been influenced in this by inferences in the Mercurius Pragmaticus, Nos. 40-41, December 1648-January 1649, TT E 537, passim.

²³² Biographical Dictionary, Vol. III, p. 49, Col. B.

²³³ Ibid., pp. 6-8.

could be defied. Poole reminded the council of God's words:
"Vengeance is mine, I will repay it".²³⁴ She hoped her message
would be understood by the men of the Council themselves, but
more importantly that it be received by their in-dwelling
Spirits: "I speake not this as you are Souldiers, but as the
Spirit of Judgement and Justice is most lively in you." ²³⁵

Her vision is most interesting for the way in which it
accentuates the need for contact with the Spirit. She sought to
enlighten the Council by touching their own supra-rational
understanding. Similarly, Charles I needed to be "convicted in
his conscience". This could only be accomplished by having him
face his spiritual self, thereby being self-informed of his
guilt. This knowledge would serve as both his punishment and
salvation. This same idea of God as a judge in conscience was
related a year earlier in Mary Cary's (fl.1636-1653) A Word in
Season to the Kingdom of England (1647). Cary instructed the
rulers and judges of England to

let Iesus Christ raigh over you; Cast your Crowns at
his feet, and submit yourselves to his royall and
glorious Authority, and incroach not in the least
degree upon his prerogatives, who as a King must only
raigh in the consciences of his people, and govern them
by his own Lawes: and therefore make you no Laws for
the conscience of his people, nor suffer any to do it
by any authority derived from you; for that were to
take the Crown off the head of Iesus Christ, and put it
on your own head ²³⁶

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

²³⁶ Mary Cary, A Word in Season, p. 3.

Later in 1649 Poole published Another Alarum of War, in which she expressed her sorrow over the execution of Charles I, and set out her views of the Regicides themselves. She discussed what she saw as the grave consequences of the shedding of Royal blood. According to Poole, "The Lord hath a controversie with the great and mighty men of the earth", and this controversy took in all "the Captaines, and Rulers, and Governours".²³⁷ The captains, rulers and governors of England had brought God's wrath upon themselves by ignoring His word and executing the king. Poole had had a vision in which she had seen the "carkasses" of the Army Council "slain upon the ground". A voice informed her that "their carkasses fell in the wilderness through unbelieve". They were not totally lost, however. While she mourned for their ruin "there stood up a young man, a man of strength". Through this person the council and country were to be redeemed. Poole did not explain whether the man in her vision represented someone within the Army Council, or whether he symbolized Christ.²³⁸

Despite the fact that the members of the Army Council and Court of High Justice were to be saved, they would still suffer for their actions. They would incur a loss of power and place

²³⁷ Elizabeth Poole, An Alarum of War Given to the Army....Foretelling the judgements of God ready to fall upon them for disobeying the word of the Lord, in taking away the life of the KING (London: 1649), TT E 555 (23), p. 2.

²³⁸ Elizabeth Poole, An Alarum of War, given to the Army, And to their High Court of Justice (so called) by the will of God; revealed in ELIZABETH POOLL (London: 1649), TT E 555 (24), p. 2.

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equal to the deprivation suffered by Charles I. She informed the Council that "As ye have served him [Charles I], so shall ye be served."²³⁹ They were to be saved spiritually, not bodily, with the destruction of their private interests and desires engendering a new spiritual awakening.²⁴⁰ The same salvation awaited all people. The destruction of the flesh was ordained by God, so "that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord."²⁴¹

Elizabeth Poole believed in the truth of her own inspiration. This belief stemmed from a religious conviction that God resided in the hearts of all true believers. She presented her prophecies to the "spirit" within the Army Council. Her own spirit had informed her that Charles I was the cause of the nation's trouble, but that he could not be killed because he was God's earthly representative. Poole's visions came out of a traditional understanding of the proper universal order and balance. The king was the rightful husband of the nation, and as such he could not be punished. Like the metaphoric husband described by William Gouge, Charles I "in regard of evil qualities may carry the image of the devil, yet in regard to his place and office, he beareth the Image of God."²⁴² Parliament's

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 10-17.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴² William Gouge, quoted in Keith Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", p. 53.

action in executing the monarch ensured God's wrath, and they would suffer for having killed the Lord's annointed. The nation, however, was not beyond salvation. If God's word was heeded the world could still be saved. Flesh would be destroyed, and people would live in the peace of the spirit. Properly understood, Poole's political statements can be seen to stem from her religious convictions that society was ordained by God, and that only he had the authority to upset the natural balance.

George Foster (fl.1650):

George Foster's The Sounding of the Last Trumpet (1650) and The Pouring Forth of the Seventh and Last Viall (1650) are prophetic instructions to repentance in anticipation of the Second Coming. Little is known of Foster except what can be gleaned from his two pamphlets, and that is very little. He appears to have been a relatively prosperous middling sort man. There are indications that he was familiar with the writings of the Digger Gerrard Winstanley and the Ranter Abiezer Coppe, but there is no evidence to indicate that he was personally acquainted with them.²⁴³ Christopher Hill indicates that some contemporaries considered him to be the "prophet of the Levellers", although whether this assertion came from his involvement with this group, or from the content of his pamphlets is unclear.²⁴⁴ Sometime before the publication of his second

²⁴³ Biographical Dictionary, Vol. II, p. 297, Col. A.

²⁴⁴ Hill, World Turned Upside Down, pp. 179-180.

pamphlet Foster changed his name to Jacob Israel to indicate his conversion in anticipation of the last days of the earth.

Foster considered himself to be a religious man before his conversion. His "outward religion", coupled with his financial success, had convinced him of his own spirituality. God cured him of this perception by striking him blind "to convince me of my unbelieve".²⁴⁵ When he accepted God, Foster regained his sight. He had been originally contacted by the Lord in his sleep, this initial touch caused him to sing with joy.²⁴⁶ The power of God took hold of Foster in a "most pleasant manner", and he was "forced to lie singing and whistling". The spirit continued to strongly affect him, and compelled him:

then to rise out of my bed between one and two a clock to dance; and so continued singing and dancing neare upon two hours by the clock....and only I count it singing, because I did (as being empowered with joy) crie ha ha tall, tol lall derah la loll! la dero toll derall tall toll dero tall aroll atoll loll loll dero in such a way did I breake forth.²⁴⁷

After this initial contact Foster began to hear the voice of God. At first the voice was faint, but as it grew louder it seemed to Foster "the most joyfulest voice that ever sounded in mine ears". At times the voice was so loud that Foster believed someone was shouting at him. It was a balm to his spirit,

²⁴⁵ George Foster, The Sounding of the Last Trumpet (London: 1650), TT E 616 (4), p. A4.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

although he admitted "it was a terrour to my flesh".²⁴⁸

Christopher Hill believes that Foster suffered from a "partial loss of sanity" due to his attempts to understand God's wishes.²⁴⁹ Foster obviously felt that many of his contemporaries would feel the same way, and he took pains to convince them of their mistake in this matter. "Let not the notion of madness possess your spirits as for you to think that I am mad", Foster warned, "but rather that it is the pleasure of the Father to turn the world upside down, and so to make use of me as he did of his son Jesus Christ". He signed himself "one of your fellow creatures" to indicate that the possibility of inspiration extended to all people.²⁵⁰

Foster stated that he was originally contacted by God in 1650. Throught this contact he lost not only his sight, but also the use of his right hand, which was cramped into a fist. God had instructed him to go to Thomas, Lord Fairfax, and present his prophecies. Fairfax had been the chief commander of Parliament's armies during the Civil War. He appeared in many of Foster's visions, and the prophet's Voice assured him that the General was the instrument of God and change.²⁵¹ Although he made numerous

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴⁹ Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 224.

²⁵⁰ George Foster, Pouring Forth of the Seventh and Last Viall, (London: 1650), TT E 616 (4*), pp. 64-66.

²⁵¹ Foster, The Sounding of the Last Trumpet., pp. 3. 7-8. 10, 11.

attempts, he was never given an interview with Fairfax.²⁵² The guards who refused him audience also forcibly opened his hand. Since he had been "intolerably proud" before his revelation, Foster viewed this whole situation as the Lord's way of humbling him.²⁵³ He believed that all people needed to be meek to truly understand God. It was human pride which kept people from recognising the "in-dwelling God":

I was ignorant of him yet he did dwell in me, and was the life of me, which is a great mystery, and unknown to most creatures though most professe they know God, that God, even the eternall God dwels in them, by which they live and move and have their being.²⁵⁴

This breaking down of pride is discussed by Hugh Barbour in his The Quakers in Puritan England (1964). Barbour notes that the intention of most Quaker behaviour (and most sectarian behaviour) was intended "not to exalt the humble but to break down the proud."²⁵⁵

Foster's indwelling spirit provided him with numerous visions and told him to spread the Word to the world.²⁵⁶ As with many contemporary prophets, Foster heralded the coming "monarchy of Christ", but he believed this monarchy involved an internal spiritual regeneration and over-turning, and not a physical rule

²⁵² Ibid., p. A5.

²⁵³ Ibid., pp. A3-A4.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 1. Foster discusses his experiences in understanding his "in-dwelling God" pp. 1-10.

²⁵⁵ Barbour, The Quakers, p. 163.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. A3.

on earth: "[T]hat resurrection in Scripture mentioned is not a resurrection of the body out of the earth: but a resurrection of the body from darknesse to light, and from the wrath of me [God] to the love of me [God]".²⁵⁷ While he envisioned a spiritual regeneration, it would not be without its results in the physical world. The converted "Jews" would gather in Italy and overthrow the Pope, after which they would destroy the power and "religion" of the Great Turk. These events were to take place in 1651.²⁵⁸

Foster's visions assured him that the children of God would come to Sion, and that the defeat of Charles I and the Scots heralded the beginning of the new era. His own rather obscure vision of an army of the south defeating an army of the north confirmed this point.²⁵⁹ Foster had another vision which involved seven happy men dressed in silk and gold finery. As they rejoiced, a hand appeared and on the wall behind them and wrote "Mene, Mene, Tek:Peres".²⁶⁰ Foster stated that God had informed him that the group of men represented Parliament, and that Parliament was interested only in securing its own power and well-being. This government, Foster was told, had been weighed

²⁵⁷ Foster, The Sounding of the Last Trumpet (London: 1650), pp. 54-55.

²⁵⁸ Pouring Forth of the Seventh and Last Viall, pp. 11-12, 15, 26, 64-66.

²⁵⁹ Foster, The Sounding of the last Trumpet, pp. 6, 7-9, 10.

²⁶⁰ This is reminiscent of John Simpson's pamphlet, Mene, Tekel, Perez; or, A Little Appearance of the Hand-Writing against the Powers and Apostates of the Times. A letter to Oliver Lord Cromwel (London: 1654), TT F 231 (2).

in the balance and had been "founde too light".²⁶¹ Foster had another vision of a field of ripe wheat. An angel with a sickle appeared and began to cut down the wheat while Foster's Voice exhorted it to "[c]ut down the loftiness of men, and bring low their haughty lookes: and J [God] like a mighty Leveller, will lay low the mountaines and hills, and make them as a plaine, and will make crook'd pathes straight, that I alone may be exhalted."²⁶²

Foster stated that God also informed him of His intention to cleanse the church. This knowledge was imparted in two visions. In the first, Foster saw a temple which was full of smoke. A man appeared wearing a crown of gold and dressed in a robe of what seemed to be pure white, but which really shimmered with many colours. This man descended into the temple and raised his arms, whereupon the smoke disappeared. The man represented God, and God assured Foster that he intended to clear His church of externals. The church needed to be purified of all outer trappings of "darknesse, and gloominesse, and cloudinesse," which only served to obscure people's view of God.²⁶³ This revelation was reinforced by a second vision in which Foster saw the moon turn to blood and fall to the earth where it was lapped up by

²⁶¹ Foster, The Sounding of the Last Trumpet, pp. 12-13.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 14.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 24. The same sort of image of "cloud" and "darknesse" obscuring a true view of God can be seen in the experience of "D. R." in Spiritual Experiences. "D. R." felt that God had "expelled that cloud of darknesse, which was vailed upon my heart." (p. 133)

swine and dogs.²⁶⁴ The moon represented church ordinances. Church ordinances, like the moon, were not the true light, but merely a weak reflection of that Light. According to Foster, God would destroy these ordinances so that people could enjoy the pure light of faith.²⁶⁵ In Foster's new world the governments and structures of the old world would collapse. All things would conform to the teachings of the Spirit.

[T]hat set time which I the eternal God have allotted Antichrist the man of sin or the beast to reign, which was for forty and two months, but now the forty and two months being expired, & come to an end, all powers of this world by Kings and Lords, and great men, their power shall be taken from them....By the beast is meant, all forms and ways of worships, rules and Governments which is the wisdom of the flesh, as teaching and praying by the wisdom of the flesh....²⁶⁶

Foster's "rule of the Spirit" was an internal religious regeneration, although it had definite and dangerous implications for those in power. Taken to its logical conclusions, Foster's system would lead to anarchy. Each person needed only to act as his or her own "in-dwelling" God instructed.²⁶⁷ Foster indicated that God desired changes in the world, and these changes could

²⁶⁴ This vision is a version of Revelations 6:12.

²⁶⁵ Foster, The Sounding of the Last Trumpet, p. 25.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

²⁶⁷ Christopher Hill, in his Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England noted the same tendency in the desire of some parliamentary soldiers to pull down anti-christ. Their type of zeal, if allowed to run its full course, would lead not only to the destruction of Charles, but would tumble God from his heavenly throne as well. It would be difficult to maintain a heavenly hierarchy when each person listened to the God within them. (pp. 79-80)

only come by directing people to follow the Word of the Spirit rather than the rules of men. According to Foster these designs included the destruction of earthly power, and the eradication of war. Self interest would be annihilated. Ambition, pride and presumption would be destroyed, resulting in a redistribution of wealth. The land would be made fruitful, and God would teach "all my sons and daughters, to be of one heart and mind". He would also prove a terror to those who continued to oppose him.²⁶⁸

All these changes would proceed from an inner grace, a salvation which stemmed from a true acceptance of Christ. Foster wanted the world to know God as he did. People needed to understand that all that truly mattered was a personal relationship with God, and an acceptance of God in the soul of the individual. From this association would follow all manner of changes. It was his role as prophet to declare this to the world:

O Earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord....All POWERS shall become as nothing: and the mighty men, and great men, as Kings and Lords, for fear of the Lord of Hosts, shall run into the hole of the rocks, and into the Dennes of the Earth to hid themselves for fear of his majesty, for he doth now arise to shake terribly the earth, and all the earth shall be become dung before him²⁶⁹

Foster's early conversion experiences show that he believed himself to be inspired, and that this inspiration required him to

²⁶⁸ Foster, The Sounding of the Last Trumpet, p. 46.

²⁶⁹ Anna Trapnel, The Cry of a Stone, pp. A1-A2.

spread the word of salvation and regeneration to a sinful nation so as to fulfill God's purpose. His prophetic visions contained ideas which had serious consequences for the political order. God would be the great leveller, and pride, possession and social station would be destroyed. This levelling had begun when "the sickle of divine justice" had cut down Charles I, the loftiest member of society. The destruction of the king indicated that God was allowing the universal order to crumble. It was imperative, therefore, to understand God's plans for the future. Foster never advocated a political uprising. People would be levelled when they came to a true knowledge of God. This internal regeneration would engender changes in society. For Foster, there was a coherence to the universe which ensured that a change in one aspect would result in a change in the whole.

Anna Trapnel (fl.1642-1660):

Anna Trapnel was the daughter of William Trapnel, a pious shipwright from Poplar in the parish of Stepney, London.²⁷⁰ She was also one of the leading Fifth Monarchist prophets. Her parents died when Anna was quite young. On her deathbed Trapnel's mother pleaded with God for special care of her child: "'Lord! Double thy Spirit upon my child'". She repeated this exhortation three times and "with much eagerness".²⁷¹ In 1645, after the death of her parents, Trapnel became the house

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

companion of a certain Mrs. Harlow in Aldergate. While living in Aldergate Trapnel was witness to the 53 day trance of Sarah Wight in 1647. This catalepsy was recorded by the minister Henry Jessey in The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced (1648).²⁷² Jessey made special note of Trapnel as woman of "approved godliness". Trapnel visited Wight on several occasions, and she may have been the "afflicted maid" with whom Wight conversed while visiting John Simpson's Baptist congregation in Allhallows.²⁷³ It is known that Trapnel was a member of Simpson's church in 1651. By this time she had left Aldergate to live with a Mrs. Wythe, a relative who resided in Allhallows.

After a brief spell with Familists in 1652, Trapnel returned to Simpson's church. Both had adopted Fifth Monarchist tenets by this time. Her first public recognition came in 1654, after visiting the Army Council with the Welsh preacher Vavasour Powell (1617-1670).²⁷⁴ When Powell emerged from his meeting she fell into a trance which lasted twelve days. During this period of

²⁷² Jessey was a Yorkshireman and led a Baptist congregation in London. For Jessey see B. R. White, "Henry Jessey and the Great Rebellion" in R. Buick Knox, ed., Reformation, Conformity and Dissent; Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 132-153.

²⁷³ Jessey, The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced, pp. 43-50, 139, 147.

²⁷⁴ Trapnel may have been gaining a reputation as a preacher by 1653. A letter from Theodorus to Viscount Conway dated July 25, 1653, in the Calendar of State Papers mentions a "female virago, or feminine tub-preacher" who was gaining a following in London. This female preacher apparently rivalled Hugh Peters in oratory. While she is not named, the editor of the CSP suggests that it was Trapnel. (CSP, DOM, Commonwealth Vol. 6, 1653-1654, pp. 50-51.

inspiration she was attended by a number of well-known citizens, including members of the Barebones Parliament and the gathered churches of London.²⁷⁵ Many of these associations continued throughout the period in which information on Trapnel is available. In 1654, at the insistence of her congregation, she made two trips into the south-west of England. She was arrested on both occasions, spending time in various prisons and Bedlam. Her last known prophecies were issued between August of 1657 and May of 1658, during which time she was in trance.

Trapnel left a record of her early dealings with God, and her eventual re-birth in the spirit. By her own admission she was an earnest Christian "after the Law" before 1647, although she had not yet experienced the true spirit of God.²⁷⁶ Her first stirrings of spirit came when she heard Hugh Peters preach a sermon on Isaiah 26:20: "Come my people, enter then into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." For Trapnel, these words "opened up the marriage covenant that is between God and his spouse." ²⁷⁷

In 1647 Trapnel "fell into fear", but God brought her through this fear by showing her "every secret sin" of which she

²⁷⁵ Trapnel, The Cry of A Stone, passim. The list of visitors includes the following members of the Barebones Parliament: Robert Bonnet, Henry Birkenhead, John Chetwood, Francis Langdon, and William West. Other visitors included Christopher Feake and Ladies Vermuyden and Darcy.

²⁷⁶ Anna Trapnel, A Legacy for Saints, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

was guilty. Viewing the long chain of sins revived her soul and destroyed her unbelief.²⁷⁸ As a result, she was able to help "the afflicted and tempted ones" for over a year.²⁷⁹ Her visions during this troubled period revolved around the sea and sea travel. The spiritual voyage was a standard theme in radical experience.²⁸⁰ In 1647 she also experienced visions relating to the New Model Army. In her revelation she saw that the

army was then drawing up towards the City, in which I had a little discovery of the presence of the Lord with them, in which day I had a glorious Vision of the New Jerusalem, which melted me into rivers of tears....I looked out at the window, where I saw a flag at the end of the street; this word it had presently upon it, thou seest that flag, the flag of defiance is with the Army, the King of Salem is on their side, he marcheth before them, he is the Captain of their Salvation.²⁸¹

Her belief that the army was the instrument of the Lord would persist even after Cromwell became Lord Protector. By 1653 she was being tempted by Satan to commit suicide. This temptation went on for months, during which time she had travelled back to Poplar. God pulled her through her period of trial, and she emerged stronger than ever.²⁸²

Trapnel first came to public notice in 1654 while accompanying the Welsh preacher and prophet Vavasour Powell to a meeting of the Army Council. When Powell emerged from his

²⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 5-6, 17-18, 23-30.

²⁷⁹ Cry of a Stone, p. 4.

²⁸⁰ Nigel Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 38, n. 54.

²⁸¹ Trapnel, The Cry of a Stone, p. 4.

²⁸² Ibid., pp. 7-9; Legacy for Saints, pp. 10-18.

meeting with Army leaders, Trapnel was "carried forth in a spirit of Prayer and Singing, from noon till night". She was taken into the house of Mr. Roberts, the Ordinary of Whitehall, where she remained in a trance for twelve days. During this time she ate and drank very little while engaging in continuous prophecy. Her visions were recorded and published in 1654 in two pamphlets: Strange and Wonderfull Newes from White:Hall:, and The Cry of a Stone. Her first Whitehall vision involved four horns. The first of these represented the bishops, and it was shattered. The second horn, though greater than the first, was likewise destroyed. The third horn was greater still and covered in splinters "like the skales of a fish". This horn represented Parliament, an assembly with "many men, having very fair and plausible pretences of love." This love, however, was all pretence. Parliament was working solely for its own good. The third horn was also broken. Cromwell was named as the fourth horn, which

was short, but very sharp, and full of variety of colours sparkling red and white and it was said by her that this last horn was different from the other three, because of great pride and swelling words, and great promises of kindness....[went] forth from it for all the people, like unto that of Absalom against the honest David.²⁸³

Cromwell was Absalom and Christ "the honest David" whose throne he had stolen. In another vision in Strange and Wonderfull Newes from White:Hall she found herself in a field of cattle, "some

²⁸³ Trapnel, Strange and Wonderful Newes, p. 5; idem, Cry of a Stone, p. 5.

lesser cattel their faces and heads like men, having on either side their heads a horn". These cattle bowed down to one of their number and "shewed much joy that he was become their Supream". This bull charged Trapnel, but she was saved by an arm which pulled her to the ground and told her: "I will be thy safety". The bull then ran at the other saints who were with Trapnel because they had dared to look "boldly in his face". The bull had battered these saints and driven them into several houses, when the ground erupted in "great fury" and destroyed the cattle. Trapnel intimated that the lead bull was Cromwell "in appearance like a lamb, but pushing with his horns like a Beast". Like the cattle in the vision, he and his followers would be "scattered, their horns broken, and so tumbled into graves".²⁸⁴ Another vision assured her that after the destruction of this group, the saints would enjoy a paradise of vineyards, gardens and fruit trees. This utopia would only come, however, if each saint let "the Spirit of Christ reign in his soul".²⁸⁵

Trapnel continually made reference to Cromwell's usurpation of Christ's throne. In Cry of a Stone, Trapnel noted Cromwell's beginnings as a seeming instrument of Christ. She related an early vision in which she watched the victory of Parliamentary forces over the Scots. In this revelation she herself was transported to the field of battle where she "beheld our Army, and their General, and hearing his [God's] Voice, saying, Behold

²⁸⁴ Trapnel, Strange and Wonderful Newes, pp. 5-6. In a

²⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

Gideon and the lapping ones with him!"²⁸⁶ Trapnel continued to refer to Cromwell as Gideon, and in a vision of the dissolution of Rump Parliament, she saw "Gideon" and General Harrison clearing the Commons of all those who had merely pretended to a love of Christ.²⁸⁷ By the time Cromwell terminated the Barebones Parliament, however, Trapnel had noted a change in him. "The Lord Gave me a vision of their breaking up, and of the deadness of Gideons spirit towards the work of the Lord". The minute that Cromwell had set himself up in Christ's true place, God indicated to Trapnel "that he was laid aside, as to any great matters, the Lord having finished the greatest business that he would employ him in."²⁸⁸

If Cromwell had not fallen from his state of grace, he would be ashamed of "his great pump and revenue, while the poore are ready to starve". The Protector's increasing status and wealth indicated that he had turned from doing God's work. Trapnel was for "the pure interest of Jesus", and because of this she did not "care a rush or a straw for the interests of man".²⁸⁹ She hoped God would cast all "Protectors" into graves to "expire and die". She did not believe in setting up any other earthly power. The only monarch acceptable to Trapnel was Christ:

²⁸⁶ Cry of a Stone, p. 6. She also had a vision of the Parliamentary victory at Dunbar. (p. 7.)

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

Oh King Jesus thou art longed for,
Oh take thy power and raign,
And let thy children see thy face,
Which with them shall remain.²⁹⁰

Trapnel's change of heart towards the Protector and the Protectorate brought a change in her treatment. As long as they were favourable to Cromwell, her prophecies had brought her little trouble from the authorities. In most cases her utterances seemed to confirm God's presence in the government. When she began to prophesy against Cromwell, however, her fortunes took a turn for the worse. She was arrested, early in 1654, but soon released, mainly because she was drawing too many people to her cell to hear her preach. Her prophecies were "doing a world of mischief" to Cromwell and his government.²⁹¹ In February 1654 Trapnel's congregation at Allhallows decided that she should be sent "all over England" to declare her prophecies. By March she was in Cornwall delivering the same sorts of heavenly messages which had earlier been considered "desperate against [Cromwell's] person, family, children, friends and government".²⁹²

The following passages, presented while Trapnel was in a six-month trance in 1657-1658,²⁹³ are typical examples.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Trapnel, The Cry of A Stone, pp. 19-20.

²⁹¹ Marchamont Needham to Oliver Cromwell, February 7, 1654, [CSP, PRO], 1654, p. 285.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Her prophecies from this trance were collected and appear in an untitled folio edition in the Bodleian. They are discussed in C. Burrage, "Anna Trapnel's Prophecies." in The

Cromwell's main crime was his betrayal of Christ, and his pretence of fighting for Christ's dominion when he really fought for his own:

Spirit and Voice hath made a league
Against Cromwel and his Crown,
The which I am confident the Lord
Will ere long so strike down.
Spirit and Voice hath made league against him
That hath such a Traytor been,
And acted such false treachery
Against the mighty king.
But him the Lord will come forth against,
And his posterity
They shall not sit upon his throne,
That he hath lifted up so high.

* * * * *

Cromwel he did appear for Christ,
And did much bloud engage
For him, and for his interest,
His enemies to enslave
When Cromwel came for in his name,
Victory did abound;
For he did say he came for Christ,
And to exalt his Crown.
He fetcht his government from Christ,
O 'twas a master Sin. 295

With her faith in Cromwell destroyed,²⁹⁶ Trapnel turned to the army, and implored that they once again accept the spirit of the Lord among them and help to bring in Christ's rule. "If you will

English Historical Review no. 26 (July, 1911), pp. 526-535.

294 Christopher Hill regards Trapnel's utterance as "reams of rather mediocre verse" See "God and the English Revolution" History Workshop, No. 17, (Spring, 1984), p. 23.

295 Burrage, "Anna Trapnel's Prophecies", p. 529. The passages appear on p. 840 of the original folio edition.

296 Despite that fact that she believed Cromwell had turned from the Lord, she continued to call him to repentance. She hoped that God would teach Cromwell "that he may reign as one of thine." See The Cry of a Stone, pp. 28-29. See also 50-55.

hearken to the Lord,/Which calleth for your hearts," Trapnel told the soldiers, they would "bring Sion back again,/Into that glorious place."²⁹⁷ Trapnel's arrest was ordered in April, 1654.²⁹⁸ Confronted by soldiers under orders from the Lord Protector to apprehend her, Trapnel proclaimed: "Thy Lord Protector we own not; thou art of the army of the Beast."²⁹⁹ She was taken to Pendenis Castle, and later removed to Bridewell, where she remained until July.³⁰⁰

Trapnel's pamphlets showed standard sectarian opposition to episcopal church government. While in trance she stated that true knowledge of Christ was personal and was learned not in books, but in the heart:

Christs Scholars they are perfected
with learning from above
To them he gives capacity
to know his depth of love.³⁰¹

Her Cry of a Stone was published in part to show that God did not need to use the learned as instruments of his Grace or Word. "It is hoped", stated Trapnel, "...that any thing that pretends to witness, a Voice, or a Message from God to this Nation, shall not

²⁹⁷ Trapnel, The Cry of a Stone, pp. 25-26. lines 7-8, 4-5.

²⁹⁸ Order of the Council to Captain Fox, Deputy Governor of Pendenis Castle, for the arrest of Anna Trapnell, April 17, 1654, CSP, PRO, 1654, p. 89 (3).

²⁹⁹ Public Intelligencer, Monday December 24 to Monday December 31, 1655, TT E 491, p. 1937.

³⁰⁰ Order to the Keeper of Bridewell for the release of Hannah Trapnell, July 26, 1654, CSP, PRO, 1654, p. 438.

³⁰¹ Trapnel, The Cry of a Stone, p. 42.

be held unworthy the hearing and consideration of any, because it is administered by a simple and unlikely hand..."³⁰² Trapnel called on soldiers, merchants, and prophets of all kinds to preach the Word of God.³⁰³ Most importantly, she wished that all people would accept Christ in their hearts as she had done. Only by doing so could they be considered one of God's "spirituall ones", and taste the "excellent sweetness" of the Lord.³⁰⁴

Trapnel usually referred to herself as the "instrument" of the Spirit, which used the "Voice" to speak through her. This was an extension of her private "audible voice" into the public sphere. When in trance, therefore, the Spirit spoke directly to the world. This "Voice" was apparently quite powerful, and was able to overpower even the loudest protests.³⁰⁵ When she was overtaken by the "Voice" she fell into long trances during which she would eat and drink little or nothing at all. When questioned about how she survived she indicated that spiritual food was more important than earthly food. God had told her that she "shal every way be supply in body and spirit, and I found a continual fulness in my stomack, and the taste of divers sweet

³⁰² Ibid., p. A2.

³⁰³ Ibid., pp. 26-29, 30-34.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 34. Trapnel wanted all people to know the "pouring forth of thy Spirit for that makes the body to crumble, and weakens nature" (p. 29)

³⁰⁵ Burrage, "Anna Trapnel's Prophecies.", pp. 526-527, 527 n.

meats and delicious food therein, which satisfied me."³⁰⁶ She also underwent physical changes during her trances. She shook violently, and spoke in a louder and louder voice as the spirit overtook her. One witness described her as becoming extremely cold during trance, and that her voice became unnaturally low.³⁰⁷

A Legacy for Saints was published in 1654 while Trapnel was in Bridewell, and contains a number of letters which she wrote to her fellow church members in Allhallows.³⁰⁸ A passage from one of these letters shows how deeply her religious convictions ran. It also makes clear that the purpose of her prophecies was to redeem sinners. In order to do the Lord's exalted work and follow his instructions she was willing to suffer:

It hath pleased the Lord to cast me at a distance from you, and your pretious meeting, and sweet, lovely, spirituall, desirable enjoyments, which is more prized by me then my life or liberty, the which is now in Jeopardy; but I am through Divine strength, not onely willing to be bound, but to dye upon so honourable an account, as I here suffer for, for which is onely the expressing the Lords bounty, and rich grace to sinners...³⁰⁹

Trapnel's words and actions make clear that her primary concerns were the redemption of sinners and the bringing in of Christ's rule. For her, this rule began in an acceptance of

³⁰⁶ Trapnel, The Cry of A Stone, p. 5.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 58; Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 89.

³⁰⁸ John Rogers' Ohel, or Bethshemesh contains a plea to Cromwell to release Trapnel, John Simpson and Christopher Feake, all of whom were in Bridewell at the time for spreading God's word. (p. 12.)

³⁰⁹ Trapnel, A Legacy for Saints, p. 49.

Christ. The deprivations which Trapnel willingly suffered for instructing the world to bring in Christ, attest to her fervent belief in her divine inspiration and mission. All changes would flow from this newfound relationship. People would realise they were equal in the sight of God. This freedom of the spirit would ensure a freedom of religion, and Trapnel felt certain that this would lead to the glorious future God had prescribed for his faithful. Trapnel's prophecies show a continuity of religious thought. Charles I had to be destroyed because he was an impediment to Christ's throne. Similarly Cromwell became an obstacle and therefore needed to be opposed. Both were minions of Antichrist. Their crimes were made worse by the fact that they should have been Christ's instruments. As king, Charles I was God's representative, but he had failed in this role through his tyranny. Part of this tyranny had been his support of Arminian religion. His execution was proof that he no longer represented the interests of God. At first, Cromwell had also appeared for Christ. His traitorous reversal was worse than that of the King. Charles I had been born into his position. Cromwell had actively sought to bring down the Lord's anointed (admittedly one who needed to be removed), only to set himself up. Trapnel's visions centred on earthly political events: the dissolution of the Rump, the dismantling of Barebones, and the setting up of Cromwell as Lord Protector. In every case, however, her divine insights were concerned with what these events meant in the playing out of God's plan.

The prophets and prophecies examined thus far illustrate the coherency of religious and political convictions which I am attempting to show was at the heart of the inspired prophecy of this period. None of these prophets had consistent "political" agendas, and it is clear that the political ideas they held were drawn from their religious viewpoints. Their political ideas were assessed and re-assessed in light of contemporary events, and in conjunction with the manner in which these occurrences impacted on the coherent divine plan for the universe. Other prophets had more discernable political agendas. Perhaps the most political of the inspired prophets of this period was the Welshman Arise Evans. The concerns of this "political" visionary are the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter V: Prophets and Prophecies, Part II:
Arise Evans (1607-c1660)

The Welsh prophet Arise Evans was one of the most prolific visionary pamphleteers of the period, and has been described as "the holy fool of the Commonwealth."³¹⁰ Because he was so prolific, he has received a great amount of attention from historians.³¹¹ Evans has been characterised in these studies as the quintessential political prophet. For this reason he merits separate attention. Evans was a Royalist---a confirmed and active Royalist. This fact needs to be reconciled with the ideas set out in this thesis. An examination of his prophecies goes a long way in understanding the roots of his royalism. These roots are planted firmly in religious conviction of universal order in which the king was seen as the representative of God on earth.

Born Rhys Evans in Llangelynin, in the parish of Merioneth, Wales, Evans' father was "a sufficient man of the parish", and gave a tenement, as well as financial support to the local curate.³¹² Evans' was traumatised by the death of his father when he was only two years old, and his early troubles continued with the bankruptcy of the cloth merchant to whom he was

³¹⁰ Biographical Dictionary, p. 257, Col. A; Hill, Change and Continuity, p. 49.

³¹¹ Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, pp. 204, 230; idem, Change and Continuity, pp. 48-77; Hill and Sheppard, "The Case of Arise Evans", passim.; P. G. Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men, pp. 136-137; O. C. Watkins, The Puritan Experience, pp. 110-112.

³¹² Hill, Change and Continuity, p. 50.

apprenticed at the age of nine. In the early 1620's he was apprenticed in Chester to his old Master's father-in-law. It was this man who first began to refer to Evans as Arise, a play on the sound of his name and his apparent godliness. His visionary career began in 1623, and became increasingly compulsive, although he seemingly encountered little success or recognition at this time. His prophetic verve abated somewhat by 1629 when he moved to London. Evans settled in the parish of Blackfriars, and came under the ministry of the Puritan William Gouge. He prospered briefly as a tailor. When his revelations began to occur again, his career faltered, and he was deserted by most of his friends. In 1633 he prophesied that Charles I would be destroyed unless he repressed Popery, and he told the Earl of Essex that he would become the "General of all England". In 1635 he predicted the death of the king at the hands of his enemies, an event coincident with the overturning of the established social and religious orders. In August of the same year he was jailed for these prophecies. He was released two years later in 1637 after being certified insane. Evans married sometime between his release and his return to London in 1640. He returned to the city supporting a wife and several children. His communication with the heavenly spirit continued. By 1641 he was again in trouble with the authorities. Upon being examined, he informed his questioner: "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other God but me." For this claim he was thrown into Bridewell, where he remained until the intercession of William

Gouge and Christopher Love secured his release in late 1641.³¹³ Until 1647 he believed that the "new age" would be ushered in by the Earl of Essex, but after the seizure of the king by the army, he placed his allegiance with Charles I. He associated with Christopher Feake's Fifth Monarchist congregation in the late 1640's, although this alliance was short-lived.³¹⁴ He continued to have visions throughout the 1650's, and all of his pamphlets date after the execution of Charles I. Shortly after the Restoration, Evans met Charles II for the first and only time. It was a brief meeting. Evans wrote more than a dozen pamphlets between 1652 and 1660, as well as editing the revelations of other prophets. He died sometime in the 1660s.

His reception among Commonwealth leaders was varied. He was generally courteously treated by Cromwell, and has been described as "the mascot of his conscience".³¹⁵ This exchange, printed in the newsbook The Faithful Scout in September 1655, illustrates the contrast between Cromwell's restraint and the antagonism of others:

O.C.: "Where away, Mr. Evans?"

A.E.: "To the Bath, my Lord."

O.C.: "But what's the reason, Mr. Evans, you wear a sword? Prophets are not to wear such weapons."

A.E.: "To keep the wolves of the time from my legs, my Lord."

O.C.: "And who be they?"

A.E.: "Soldiers."

O.C.: "Oh, you think you shall have a king still?"

³¹³ Biographical Dictionary, p. 256, Col. A.

³¹⁴ Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 42 and n. 4.

³¹⁵ Biographical Dictionary, Vol. I, p. 256, Col. B.

A.E.: "Yes, my Lord, and I am assured of it." ³¹⁶
Cromwell apparently left Evans "smiling" and "parted with a compliment." Evans later noted that he was often threatened by soldiers at Whitehall after defeating them in debates concerning monarchy.³¹⁷

Evans' call to divine service was typical. As with other inspired prophets, he experienced a dramatic conversion in which he was overwhelmed by the power of God.

When I came to my Chamber I laid my books upon the Table, & fell upon my knees, went to prayer, and putting my whole strength and Faith to obtain and fervently to ask the true light and knowledge of God's will concerning myself, I soon was out of breath and not able to utter a word though my spirit boiled within me, and being thus wearied to refresh myself I laid me down upon my bed, and as in high Meditations or Contemplations did ascend in thoughts to Godward, being perfectly awake and sensible, a laudable sharp shrill, halting voice near mine ear, said to me go to thy book, where upon apprehending the voice to come from God, I suddenly started up and to the Table I went, where my Bible lay open, immediately fastening mine eyes upon Ephes. 5.14 being these words, wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light...³¹⁸

He did not immediately begin his prophetic career. At first he resisted the urge to declare the revelations he received. The visions, however, continued until he had no choice but to spread

³¹⁶ The Faithful Scout, TT E 233, No. 256 September 21 to September 28, 1654, p. 1962.

³¹⁷ Arise Evans, To the Most High and Mighty Prince Charles the II. By the Grace of God, KING of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc. An Epistle Written and humbly presented for His Majesties use, and the Enlightening of the Nation (London: Printed for R. Lowndes and Simon Gape, 1660), TT E 2118 (2), pp. 18-19.

³¹⁸ Quoted in Hill and Sheppard, "Arise Evans", pp. 356-357.

the word. "[H]aving so many visions upon visions to confirm the certainty of the Judgement", stated Evans, "I could not contain my Knowledge, but was forced to declare to all that I had to do with."³¹⁹

In 1652 Evans published A Voice from Heaven. This lengthy pamphlet contains most of the basic ideas which Evans continued to expound for the remainder of the decade. He stated that the contents of this pamphlet had been inspired by God, and that God had instructed him to spread the Word to the nation.³²⁰ The pamphlet itself was an exhortation to Parliament to mend its ways, and a retroactive reprimand for the execution of the king.³²¹ A marginal note indicated that the assembly lacked insight into God's wishes: "Here is hid wisdom of God in a mystery which none of the Parliament knew: for had they known it, they would not have put the King to death".³²² He compared Charles I to Japhet, indicating that his death signalled the ruin of Parliament: "King Charles is that seed of Iaphet; who by his coming in to Jesus Christ, and suffered for his truth, brings the rebellious seed of Ham to such eternall servitude they shall not

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 357.

³²⁰ Arise Evans, A Voice from Heaven, "To the Reader", pp. A2-A3. In the same year Evans published An Echo to the Voice from Heaven (London: 1652), TT E 1304 (2) which is a re-issue of the same material in a different format.

³²¹ A Voice from Heaven, p. 2.

³²² Ibid., p. 4.

rise againe."³²³ Charles I, however, would rise again in his namesake son and bring about the order which God himself had ordained.³²⁴

The inference that Charles I, like Christ, would rise again, was important to Evans. He often cast Charles I or his heir Prince Charles in the role of Christ. According to Evans, Charles I's righteousness had been declared by a star: "I saw a Star on the day that King Charls came to Pauls to give thanks to God for the Queens safe deliverance, at 10 a'clock in the morning, being a cleere day; and the Star was neere the Sun. Let none oppose it, when Scripture speaks, when a signe from Heaven speaks and declares his righteousnesse according to the Scripture".³²⁵ Again, this draws a parallel between Christ and Charles I. Evans was not the only Royalist to make the connection between the King's sacrificial death and the sacrificial death of Christ.³²⁶ Evans' pamphlets presented a millennial scheme which incorporated an existing form of government. "You that look for Christs personall reigne here on earth;" advised Evans, "know, that it shall be in the Kingly

³²³ Ibid., pp. 9-10. The reference is to Revelations 10. 7.

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ See Henry Leslie, The Martrydome of King Charles, or his conformity with Christ in his sufferings. In a Sermon preached at Bredan before his Majesty of Great Britain. By Bishop Downe. (The Hague: Printed by Samuel Brown, 1649), TT E 569 (10).

power, established here againe: when this state [Commonwealth] is dissolved."³²⁷

Much of this pamphlet is taken up with expositions of Amos chapters 8 and 9. Both illustrations point out the eventual, and inevitable, triumph of the king and downfall of Parliament. This was indicated in Amos chapter 9, and was "signified in these words, the plowman shall overtake the reaper; and the treader of Grapes, him that drawes forth that which is not his owne."³²⁸ For its part in the Civil War and the King's execution, Evans believed London would be made a wasteland. The city had proved itself to be another Sodom or Gomorrah:

the Lord laments the fall of London from its former state, saying; how is the faithful City become an harlot; it was full of judgements, righteousnesse lodged in it, but now murtherers: thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water."³²⁹

He did not think that the city was beyond salvation. It could still save itself by heeding the words of God's true prophet:

[W]ithout Pride the Petitioner saith, he is assured by Scripture, by Visions, by other infallible Signes agreeable with scripture, that he only is appointed of God, and none but he on earth can shew you the like, and administer unto you the knowledge of salvation.'³³⁰

In claiming to be the only true voice of God, Evans reveals a difference between himself and other radical prophets. As has already been pointed out, most sectaries believed that all people

³²⁷ Evans, A Voice from Heaven, p. 70.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 35.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

³³⁰ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

had the potential for divine inspiration. Mary Cary expressed the common attitude in 1647:

[I]f you do prohibit any from Preaching Jesus Christ, you do quench the spirit, and oppose the freeness of the spirit, who is a free Agent. And as the winde bloweth where it listeth, though we see it not, so doth the spirit, and God hath not tyed himself to give out his spirit to such particular men, and to no other, but to whome he pleases.³³¹

Evans did, however, publish and endorse the revelations of other prophets when they agreed with the ideas imparted to him by God.

In 1653 Evans published The Message of God by a Dumb Woman to the Lord Protector, the prophecy of Elinor Channel, a poor woman who had travelled from her home to London to spread the Word of God as she was instructed. Her contact originally occurred in a dream, striking her almost as a physical blow. Her experience has all the traits of contemporary inspiration:

[A]t night, as she was in bed in a slumber, had a Blow given upon her heart, which blow awaked her. And immediately with that, the thoughts of her heart were changed, and all the corruption thereof taken away, that from that day to this, she could think of no evil. And then she heard an audible voice, which said unto her, come, come away, I will send thee on my message to London, fear not to go, for I thy Lord am with thee.³³²

The message of the Lord struck her dumb; she could speak no word but God's. She had been found by Evans wandering the streets of London, abused by the crowds. He, as a true servant of God, had written down her message and had it printed, prefacing it with a

³³¹ Mary Cary, A Word in Season, pp. 4-5. See also Trapnel's Strange and Wonderfull Newes, pp. 6-7.

³³² Elinor Channel, The Message of God by a Dumb Woman to the Lord Protector Printed for Arise Evans (London: 1653), TT E 1471 (3), pp. 1-2.

passage from Proverbs: "Open thy mouth for the Dumb in the case of all such as are appointed to Destruction."³³³ After her initial contact with God she continued to be given divine correspondence, which in every case put her into a trance:

When she is Dumb, all her sences are taken up, and then the matter which troubles her mind, is dictated and made plain to her by the Spirit of God; so that when she comes to her self, she has it by heart. ³³⁴

Her message was a call to redemption, and contained instructions on how to prepare for the end of the world. After blessing the House of Parliament, and wishing peace to the members, she warned that "[t]he sword must be stayed", and "the knots of peace and love must be made in all Christian lands." These knots could only be tied by the true Gospel, and the only person with the power to ensure its establishment was Oliver Cromwell, who had by this point become Lord Protector. Channel cast Cromwell in the role of the Protector of the Lord's vineyard, and as such, he had a responsibility to ensure that the grapes over which he had custody received the nourishment they required to thrive and grow.³³⁵

Evans used the end of this pamphlet to instruct Cromwell in the ways of the true Gospel. He felt that the Lord Protector was straying further and further from the true path. Cromwell took too great an interest in, and placed too much stock in, the

³³³ Ibid., title page.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

³³⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-6.

rantings of false Fifth Monarchist prophets such as Christopher Feake, John Simpson, and particularly Anna Trapnel, whom he noted was referred to by some as "the Diana of the English".³³⁶ Evans seems to have had a particular grudge against the Fifth Monarchists, a group with whom he had formerly been involved.³³⁷ Both Evans and the Fifth Monarchists believed the millennium would bring about a two-fold change, one spiritual and one worldly. For Evans, acceptance of Arminian Anglicanism marked the spiritual change, while the physical transformation was represented by a return of Monarchy and the uprooting of republicanism. For the Fifth Monarchists, the religious re-birth came from acceptance of an in-dwelling Spirit. The country would be governed by Mosaic law, and administered by a godly Parliament which resembled the biblical, theocratic Sanheydren.³³⁸

In The Voice of Michael the Archangel to the Lord Protector (1653), Evans once again warned Cromwell to follow the word of God, or suffer the consequences. He discussed the Protector's "affliction" on St. Michael's day as a sign and signal from God. The prophet never indicated the nature of this affliction, although it may be assumed to be gout or ague from which the Protector was known to suffer.³³⁹ Evans emphasised his lack of

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

³³⁷ Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 42 and n. 4.

³³⁸ Ibid., Chps. 6, 7.

³³⁹ Ashley, Cromwell, The Conservative Dictator, pp. 33, 142, 178, 193-194, 295.

desire to issue yet another warning to Cromwell. Such admonitions had become an annoyance to everyone. It was incumbent on Evans, however, to reiterate God's Word as often as Cromwell ignored it:

I would not declare it, if I knew a better interpreter that would deal more faithfully with you concerning it, than I shall do; for I believe, though I be but a mean instrument, yet I am appointed of God to tell you, that it was Gods love to rebuke you, and it was his mercy to save you, and good may come to you of it.³⁴⁰

Cromwell's trouble on St Michael's day was a sign that God had disowned his government.³⁴¹ He, like Charles I before him, had been led astray by bad counsel. His ministers had failed to deal faithfully with him, and both he and the nation were suffering for it. Evans cited a list of biblical kings (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, David, Amaziah), who had been instructed through prophetic insight, and specified the consequences attendant upon their listening to, or ignoring, the prophets they had been sent. Cromwell would be wise to follow the example of those kings who had chosen to listen to God's messengers.³⁴²

Evans next listed the sins of which Cromwell was guilty, and provided each with a biblical precedent. The first of these sins was his "presumption in declaring his Statutes", especially

³⁴⁰ Arise Evans, The Voice of Michael the Archangel to the Lord Protector (London: 1653), TT E 1480 (2), p. 2.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁴² Ibid., p. 4.

considering that he was not the true representative of God.³⁴³ Cromwell and his followers had disregarded the law, thinking "that it is lawful for them to take what they can get by the sword." ³⁴⁴ Such actions contravened both the laws of the state and the laws of God. He was dishonest in his dealings with the nation, and insincere in his dedication to true religion. While he gave an outward show of piety, it was merely an act: "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit." This was a statement which was often made against "false prophets" and sectaries, the implication being that they kept up the pretence for their own benefit and profit.³⁴⁵ Cromwell had also been complicit in an act which Evans viewed as one of filial impiety: the execution of Charles I. Not only was Charles I the "father" of the nation, he was the genuine representative of God on earth and "the sone of your true and onely mother, the Church of England." ³⁴⁶ Finally, the Protector was mistaken in his belief that he followed the path of God's choosing. This was demonstrated in the aforementioned sins, but was most obvious in his repeated ignoring of the Divine messages imparted by Evans

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 6. The reference is Psalm 50. 16, 17.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 6-7. The reference given is Psalm 50. 18.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 7. Psalm 50. 19. For an example of a similar argument being used against sectaries see Edward Stokes, The Wiltshire Rant; or a Narrative wherein the most unparalleled Prophane Actings, Counterfeit Repentings, and evil speakings of Thomas Webbe, late pretended Minister of Langley Burrial, are discovered (London: 1652), TT E 669 (5), pp. 2-3.

³⁴⁶ Evans, The Voice of Michael the Archangel, p. 7. Psalm 50. 8.

himself. 347

Matters were made worse by the fact that Evans had already proven himself to be a true prophet through his past predictions:

For I have the **spirits** that David had, because he and I was **anointed together**; and I believe that you will say that you have seen some of the effects of my **annointing** by my **propheseysing**, which already have been fulfilled.³⁴⁸

David had been proven a true king through the passage of time. History had vindicated him, even as it would (and in some instances already had) vindicate Evans. However, true absolution did not come through the passage of time, but rather through the mysterious workings of the spirit on the soul of the prophet: "[I]t is clear; that as David was **anointed with oile**, as you see by the **History**: so I was **anointed by the Spirit**, as you see by the **Mystery**."³⁴⁹

Cromwell continued to ignore Evans' warnings, and so in May, 1653, Evans issued two petitions to the Protector. The first was directed to him, on behalf of "Gods glorie, the Kingdom's behalf, your honours behalf, and the behalf of the whole world besides."³⁵⁰ Evans observed Cromwell's repeated disregard for God's instructions, and reminded him to look to the past to see

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁵⁰ Arise Evans, "To His Excellency the Lord General Cromwell." 16 May 1653, TT E 669 f. 17 (7). Both petitions were one page broadsheets.

how truly Evans' predictions had fallen out. The first step in putting things into proper order was the disbanding of Parliament. Evans pointed out that Parliament had proven ill-disposed to carry out the will of God, and had been rewarded with the loss of their illegitimate power. Time was running out for the Protector as well, and the prophet advised him to "use your Jewel for you best advantage, lest you loose it, as the Parliament did, for want of using it aright, according to the minde of God, and your Petitioners instructions." ³⁵¹ The second petition was essentially the same as the first, although it contained an allusion to the prophecy of John Farley, which Evans was later to interpret. Evans had set out this second petition sooner than he would have liked, because he found that people clamoured for guidance:

...I finde the general spirit of the Nations, and men of all sorts of judgements exceedingly disquieted, as not knowing what to do at this time, but crying to me, as if they expected that God will do some things by me for the settlement and peace of this Nation: It is truth, I dare not deny it, and to Gods glorie be it spoken, that I have received Talents from him which I must not hide, but shew to all how God is pleased to proceed in his work by me. ³⁵²

Evans prayed for a way to allay the people's fears. His answer came in the form of John Farley, a man of minor gentry stock from the north of England, who had lost his land and fortune in the Civil War. Farley had been plagued by visions and

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Arise Evans, "To his Excellency the Lord General Cromwell and his Honourable Councel of the Armey at White Hall. 20 May 1653. TT E 669 f. 17 (9).

Evans interpreted these visions to show "[t]hat the late Parliament was the Beast mentioned, Rev. 13. that this Representative [Cromwell] is the Image thereof, and that the fifth Monarchy will shortly be established in the Person of CHARLS STEWART." 353

Evans' published Farley's revelations in The Bloody Visions of John Farley (1653). He used the first part of this pamphlet to restate his own past successes, and to show the ways in which Parliament had proven false in the eyes of God.³⁵⁴ He claimed that it was Parliament's pride over their victory in the Civil War which made them believe they were God's chosen instrument. This was a false belief. God had not granted them victory for their own sakes, but rather to punish the people with Parliamentary government for national sins.³⁵⁵

Farley's visions conform to the standard "experience" visions, and Evans' interpretations show up his notion of the Fifth Monarchy. The first part of the vision runs as follows:

I saw in a Vision revealed unto me as I was standing upon stone steps, at a place in London, there came a man riding before me, and made a stand against me, and then I saw a Coatch coming between the man and me passing by, and in the Coatch was a woman cloathed in

³⁵³ Arise Evans, The Bloody Vision of John Farley (London: 1653), TT E 1498 (1), title page. Evans re-issued Farley's vision the following year. This second pamphlet was only eight pages, and was merely a presentation of the vision part of his 1653 pamphlet. The only unique aspect of this work was that it is fronted with a woodcut of a "monstrous child" which has forked toes and is wrapped around with a snake.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. A3-A6.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. A6.

scarlet, and one who stood by me said: Behold this woman, how do you like her? And I answered, I liked none, but mine own, and then the man who was on the Horse back, said unto me, then it seemeth you like none, but one of your own breaking, then there came six youths, who wore blue Coats and blue Caps (Like to the hospital youths,) and stood between the man on the horse back and me, and said, behold, take notice of the Moon, and thereupon I looked up and saw a sign post, with the sign of the Moon hanging as a sign under it, which I beholding presently ther appeared a spot of bloud upon the picture of the moon, which spot spread itself over all the Moon, and the bloud sparked upon the sky and overspread the same.³⁵⁶

Evans interpreted the fact that the vision was revealed in the morning, and the man on horseback, to signify that the vision would soon come to pass. The woman in scarlet represented "this bloody Parliament and State, which will suddenly vanish away and be consumed."³⁵⁷ The "scarlet woman" was a common representation of the "whore of Babylon". Evans used the image to tie Parliament to the "whore", and therefore gave biblical authority to the idea of Parliament's destruction. The six youths in blue denoted the waning and death of Charles I, while the line "behold the Moon" implied the comet seen in December 1652 (the significance of which Evans was later to interpret). According to Evans, the blood which appeared on the face of the moon foretold the division within Parliament, and its ultimate destruction. The moon turning to blood was part of an apocalyptic process, and was a current theme in much of the apocalyptic writings of the

³⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

day.³⁵⁸ The first part of this vision continues:

Then suddenly falling down upon my knees, and lifting up my hands to heaven, I called upon the Lord to be my guider and defender, and immediately upon that there appeared by the picture of the Moon a man sitting, having a candle lighted in his hand, then came another man with a candle unlighted in his hand, and he lighted his candle at the other candle, that the other man had in his hand, and departed: And then the man who sat by the Moon spake and said, I thank you all for beholding the same.³⁵⁹

The men with the candles signified that Parliament would be forced to search for a "great Commander" to help them heal their divisions. A lighted candle was the symbol of spiritual search used by such sectarian groups as the Seekers. The two men may also be representative of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-4, who set themselves up to preach against the Beast. Once again the pamphlet shows Farley's apocalypticism, and Evans' use of the apocalypse to reflect upon current affairs.

The second half of the vision runs as follows:

Then there came a Chariot with milk white horses like as if it had come out of a Court by the place where I stood, and as they approached men, I thought them to be of fire, so sparkling that the heat thereof came mightily unto me, whereby I was forced to shrink back from the extremity thereof, and returning two or three steps back, I beheld the horses coming up the steps after me, thus going back, and feeling for some place to shelter myself from the heat thereof: but find in the street as I went neither door nor shop window open, I could have no place of safeguard.

According to Evans the milk-white horses and chariots represented Prince Charles Stuart and his supporters. The Prince would

³⁵⁸ Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 98. The biblical references are Joel 2:13; Acts 2:20; Revelations 6:12.

³⁵⁹ Evans, The Bloody Vision, pp. 3-4.

return to England to find the people unwilling to listen to his words, and so would "resolve to proceed with Fire and Sword to wash the Kingdom with bloud, then the Kingdom will come into him, and he will prevail."³⁶⁰ The chariots are a direct allusion to the fiery chariots of Revelations 6:2. The men whom Farley thought "to be of fire" were often interpreted in experience visions to represent angels. The revelation resumes with Farley confronted by the chariots.

And seeing before me another Chariot with horses approaching toward me, I was greatly troubled in minde, and then beholding upon my right hand a street turning another way in which I thought to be free, entered the same: And having gone but a little way therein, it was beset in like manner. And there came foremost a man having a long light like unto a torch in his hand, which when I saw, I thought it was Doomes day, and fell to the ground as a dead man, and could not move hand nor foot, yet hand my remembrance perfect, and when he came unto me, he said, who is here: but I said nothing unto him, and then he strode one foot over men, and lift me up from the earth, and held me in his arms and blue into mine ear three or four times, then he said there was no means to help me, but to be washed in the bloud of Jesus Christ, so soon as he washed and bathed by bodie all in bloud; which being done he departed and went forward, and I thought he drew me after him.

Evans represented the man with the torch as Prince Charles, and cast him in the role of national redeemer. His method of imparting knowledge by blowing in Farley's ear was a standard feature in radical visions. Farley represented the nation which was deaf to his words, but which was saved through being washed with the blood of Christ. As the nineteenth century Baptist minister C. H. Spurgen noted: "Blood was accepted by God as the

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

symbol of atonement. 'Without the shedding of blood there is not remission' of sin".³⁶¹

The idea of salvation through blood is continued in the next part of the vision.

Then presently I was brought like as is I had been in some great Church, wherein was much timber work, and there I saw men washing and besmearing all the Posts, and Timbers with blood, and then I seemed as if I were to depart of the same place, but coming to the door of it, I heard as it were a rushing of a mightie winde, with a noise of Chariots and Horses, with beholding of sumptuous buildings and multitudes of men, and being astonished therewith, I returned into the church again, and then by that time I seemed to have a great bundle of bladders about me which vanished all, but three, whereof one was very little, and the rest were very great, especially one of them, and these two seemed like two earthen pots, which wearied me to bear. And as I went forward in a bake-wayflying from the Church, I heard a voice, saying, go apace: and when I came to the end, at a place where I could go no further; I though these pots did diminish mightily, and there came a voice unto me, saying, there will not be left the worth of half a peny remaining of all this fight, so I awaked.³⁶²

Evans explained Farley's entrance into the Church as illustrating God's desire to punish those who had defiled his churches. This would include most of the members of Parliament and the sectaries, who had a distinct dislike for the "Romish" trappings of the Laudian church which Evans supported. The terrible sounds which Farley heard coming from outside of the church represented the fighting and troubles which were to occur in London. The view of "sumptuous buildings and multitudes of

³⁶¹ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Voice of the Blood of Christ" in his collected Sermons (Philadelphia: Buler Books, 1982 [1859]), p. 65.

³⁶² Evans, The Bloody Vision, pp. 4-7.

men" from the church parallel the many views of Heaven in radical experiences. Such scenes usually indicated not only redemption, but the belief that heaven could be made on earth, an undertaking which was much easier to accomplish in the New Jerusalem than elsewhere.³⁶³ The vanishing bladders of blood indicated that the "vain professors" of Parliament would be brought to account for their misdeeds. The three remaining bladders represented three Parliamentarians who would raise armies against Charles II, but who would ultimately be destroyed.³⁶⁴ These bladders are reminiscent of the ceremony of the Pacification of the Jews in John 2:6, and are "conflated with images of sacrifice and apocalypse."³⁶⁵ This ceremony involved the sprinkling of blood, and it was accepted that the "righteous are spoken of as coming to the blood of sprinkling....for our salvation and glory." ³⁶⁶

Evans' interpretation of Farley's vision is certainly political in content and purpose. The basis of his acceptance of royal power and his rejection of parliamentary authority stems from his belief that only God had the right to constitute governments. Only by returning monarchy could the proper universal balance be restored. Evans believed that the Laudian Church represented the true church, and that this church needed

³⁶³ Sasson, The Shaker Spiritual Narrative, passim.; Lee, Historical Background, passim.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 8-10.

³⁶⁵ Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 98.

³⁶⁶ Spurgeon, Sermons, p. 66.

to be restored in order for the nation to be redeemed. Salvation would proceed from the "second coming", an event to occur within the hearts of true believers, in other words, in the hearts of those who embraced the Church of England as it had existed under Laud. Parliament had subverted the natural divine order by executing Charles I, although Evans saw this as a necessary step on the road to redemption. The blood of Charles I, like the blood of Christ, had been shed to wash away the sins of the nation.³⁶⁷ Parliament's rule had been imposed in order to punish the nation for those sins. Now the time came for the return of the king, which for Evans implied the spiritual second coming.

Farley's second vision also conformed to testament experiences and images. This short vision runs as follows:

And being in fear and amazement at this bloody Vision, within a quarter of an hour after fell into a trance again and saw another Vision, which is as followeth:

I beheld, and lo, I was in a field (as I thought) newly sown with wheat, and as I beheld, I saw upon the Land sowed, a company of Doves being milk white, and all of them stood in a round ring, or circkle, and in the midst was onely one alone by himself which surpassed all the rest in brightness, shining like the Sun-beams in its brightness, so did this Dove appear in brightness and glorie, and I awaked again.³⁶⁸

Evans explained that the setting of the vision indicated a "new kingdom". The doves indicated the spotless nobles, and the

³⁶⁷ The biblical idea of "blood guilt" (that blood could pay for blood) was used by Royalists and Parliamentarians to explain Charles I's execution, although their usages were obviously different. See Patricia Crawford, "Charles Stuart, That Man of Blood." The Journal of British Studies Vol. 16 No. 2, (Spring, 1977), pp. 41-61.

³⁶⁸ Evans, The Bloody Vision, p. 6.

circle the "endless, everlasting, and everstanding Court that shall be raised and established here again." The dove which surpassed all the rest in brightness, and which stood in the centre of the circle represented Charles II.³⁶⁹ The location of this vision in a field of new sown wheat is typical of experiences, and was usually interpreted, as Evans had interpreted it, to signify a "new kingdom". Anna Trapnel had used the antithetical image of a field lying fallow to indicate the stagnation and spiritual decay of the state:

We will have Oaks and Gardens....but they shall have no springs in them; but they shalbe as dry cropt ground; yea as Fallow-ground: What lovelyness is ther, to walk upon Fallow ground?³⁷⁰

Both of these vision settings can be set against the testimony of the Shaker John Rankin Sr. In his vision he walked to a field at night, and there "at a distance from man and under the shade of the full grown corn, [he] poured out his soul before God." He was assured by an audible voice that those who thirsted after righteousness would be sated. Rankin had left behind the world of men, and entered a land "full grown" in spirit.³⁷¹ Many of the visions of religious experience took place in outdoor settings, especially in the "waking dream-type" vision which

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁷⁰ Trapnel, Strange and Wonderful Newes, p. 6. Trapnel's view of a land in which the Spirit lay fallow compares well with Isaac Pennington's vision of the desert as spiritual wasteland. (See below). Trapnel's ideas also compare well to the standard Puritan idea of England as the "garden of God". See Barbour, p. 192.

³⁷¹ Sasson, The Shaker Spiritual Narrative, p. 53.

Farley, Trapnel, and Rankin all experienced. The image of doves draws upon one of the symbols of Christ. The appearance of this particular symbol allowed Evans to strengthen the analogy of the king as the representative of Christ. The white colour of these doves indicated their purity, and therefore, the purity of the court.

Evans used the next fifteen pages of his pamphlet to call for the restoration of monarchy. Once again he declared that Parliament's victory had been granted by God to punish the people for their sins. Only through suffering for its sins could the nation hope to be truly redeemed.³⁷² He included a brief caveat for astrologers, which was directed at George Wharton (1617-1681) ³⁷³, for what Evans saw to be his "Romish" leanings. Wharton was the leading Royalist astrologer during the Civil War. In this caveat, Evans declared that astrologers were "condemned as men contrary to the Spirit of God", and urged them to take up works which would be "more acceptable to God, and beneficial to his people".³⁷⁴

The remainder of the pamphlet was used to refute a work by

³⁷² Evans, The Bloody Vision, pp. 15-37.

³⁷³ George Wharton sought to counter the predictions of parliamentary astrologers William Lilly (1602-1681) and John Booker (1603-1667). For the use of astrology during the Civil War see Harry Rusche, "'Merlini Anglici': Astrology and Propaganda from 1644 to 1651." English Historical Review No. 80, (Spring, 1965), pp. 322-333.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 37-48. The quote is from p. 40.

the Fifth Monarchist William Aspinwall,³⁷⁵ and shows Evans' belief Parliament was the Beast, and that those "Godly" ministers who supported it were frauds. Such priests "came near to God with their mouths, but their hearts are far from him, and their works abominable to God and man." ³⁷⁶ Preachers such as the Fifth Monarchist Vavasour Powell attempted to "propagate the Gospel, as they call it" not through love and truth, but through the force of arms. Things had come to such a grievous point that the word godliness had come to be nothing more than the "Mark of the Beast"³⁷⁷

Evans noted that both the destruction of Parliament and the downfall of Archbishop William Laud had been previously predicted through the use of numerology. The "numbers" of Laud and of Parliament, they asserted, both added to 666. Evans disagreed. Whereas Parliament's number indicated it to be the Beast, Laud's indicated salvation. The Archbishop's number had

³⁷⁵ This refutation is of William Aspinwall's A Brief Description of the Fifth Monarchy, or Kingdome, that is shortly to come into the World. And a propnostick of the time when this fifth Kingdom shall begin (London: Printed by M. Simmons, and sold by Livewell Chapman, 1653), TT E 708 (8). Evans rebuttal runs from pp. 49-72. In this rejoinder Evans hoped "by the assistance of Gods Spirit to confute and drive you away, and make it appear that you are a venomous Asp, pulling your Pine out of your Wall, on which you hang all your glory, and that your Asp-pine-wall will down." (p.49)

³⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 80.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 59-60. Evans had used numerology to show that the number of parliament was the same as the number of the beast. "And I find the number of this name [the Weall pVblike of EngLand] to be 666. for the numeral letters of it, are these: Dll 600. LUV 60 I. 6.." (p. 61)

been incorrectly calculated by using a shortened version of his name (Will Laud). The correct sum of William Laud numbered 1657, and signified that before this date the world would acknowledge its error and "submit to William Lauds rule in form of worship, doctrine, and discipline, as the only way to salvation." ³⁷⁸ While Evans' views certainly reflected on the political climate of the time, and had dangerous political implications, the main thrust of his ideas focus on the battle between "true religion" (Laudianism) on the one hand, and "false religion" (anything else) on the other.³⁷⁹ Laud stood for king and the true divine ordering of the world, and Charles I stood for Christ and salvation.

In 1654 Evans released a pamphlet entitled The Euroclydon Winde Commanded to Cease in which he presented a number of his own visions. His prologue states that he had tried to show his prophecies to Cromwell but had been prevented by his advisers. The Protector was now secluded by his counsellors in much the same manner as Charles I had been prior to the Civil War.³⁸⁰ Because of this Evans had no choice but to publish his vision. The major part of this pamphlet is taken up with a series of revelations which appear under the heading: "A Moderate Vindication of his Highnesse the Lord Protector, From the popular

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

³⁷⁹ This follows John Bale's idea of two warring churches.

³⁸⁰ Arise Evans, The Euroclydon Winde Commanded to Cease (London: 1654), TT E 1491 (2), p. B1.

Aspersions now cast upon him."³⁸¹

Evans attempted to vindicate Cromwell from any part in the king's death, laying the blame entirely upon the shoulders of Parliament.³⁸² It was important for him to do so, given the role in which he was to cast Cromwell in the advent of the Fifth Monarchy. In the first vision, after falling into a trance, Evans "was carried in the spirit into Whitehall to the Council chamber" where he met a weeping Cromwell. Through tears which filled Evans' "large Holland" handkerchief, the Protector explained that he had been forsaken by his counsellors. In the second vision, Evans once again fell into a trance. In this state he was transported to a spot where Cromwell and Charles I walked arm in arm and chatted in a friendly manner. While he viewed this scene he heard a voice from above which said: "Cromwells house is a sure house, for he shall bring in the Kings son."³⁸³ In the third vision Evans found himself at a prayer meeting. As he sat in the audience Cromwell appeared and declared that he was not what people thought him to be. He revealed his "unblemished chest" as a sign of his innocence.³⁸⁴ Evans saw the first and third visions as indications of Cromwell's innocence and good intentions. He believed that the voice in the second vision was sent from God to tell him that

³⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 1-64.

³⁸² Ibid., pp. 1-4.

³⁸³ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

Cromwell would bring in Prince Charles and the Fifth Monarchy.

Evans' royalist sympathies may have involved him in political intrigue. In this pamphlet he includes a curious vindication for his previous year's predictions. He had predicted the return of Prince Charles in 1653, and felt the need to explain away the non-occurrence of this event. Evans explained that God did not need to fulfill the terms of the prophecies he imparted to his messengers. The most interesting point in this vindication is that there is some indication Evans may have been privy to Royalist plans. Taking the role of an admonitory friend in conversation with himself he chided:

Dost thou think that the King will hazard his person and come to England to fulfill thy words? I dare say he regards thee not, nor thinks of thy words, neither did he ever send any to tell thee, that he would come to England upon such account.³⁸⁵

This passage is interesting for two reasons. First, although Evans certainly believed himself to be God's messenger, he did not seem to believe that Prince Charles held the same opinion. The intimation that Prince Charles might have sent someone to forewarn him is interesting, because it presents evidence of a guided propagandist role for Evans. Certainly Evans' committed and vocal royalism would have made him a perfect vehicle for spreading royalist views. Evans himself would likely have taken any opportunity to help bring in the form of government ordained by God. However, it may only be that this was an accusation brought against him of which he was trying to

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

absolve himself. Unfortunately, there is no further evidence in this or his other pamphlets to lend support to either view.³⁸⁶

Evans may have been part of a Royalist attempt to return Charles Stuart to England in 1653. A 1651 revolt known as the "Love Conspiracy" had attempted to re-established the Stuart monarchy in England. Evans was certainly acquainted with the Presbyterian Christopher Love who was executed for his part in the failed restoration bid.³⁸⁷ Evans himself was not implicated in the "Love Conspiracy", and he had thoroughly disassociated himself from Presbyterians by 1654. However, this does not preclude an active political role for Evans.

Evans ended this pamphlet with a "word" concerning astrologers. Whereas he had earlier considered astrologers to be "contrary to the Spirit of God", he now considered them to be

³⁸⁶ An obscure reference in the Calendar of State Papers, may also implicate Evans in "revolutionary plots". A letter of April 4, 1660 from a certain Rice Jones to a Mr. Evan Thomas in London intimates at a possible uprising. It is unclear what the object of this uprising would be, although Jones used religious language, and referred to Thomas and others as "creatures". It may be that the "design" was the second uprising of the Fifth Monarchist cooper Thomas Venner in 1660. The letter indicates the involvement of Vavasour Powell (although Powell denied any involvement in the Venner plot), a Welsh preacher with whom Evans was acquainted. Rice asked Thomas to deliver "the enclosed, which is of concern, to Master Livewell Chapman, or if he be away on the present design, to Evans, Roberts, or John Williams". Evans was certainly familiar with Livewell Chapman, a London printer with Fifth Monarchist sympathies. It is unlikely that the Evans mentioned is Arise, given the prophet's views on the Fifth Monarchists and his joy at the Restoration. See Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Commonwealth, 1659-1660 Vol. 13, p. 407.

³⁸⁷ Evans claimed he attended Love's execution. An Echo to the Voice from Heaven, pp. 62-66

"far more excellent, meek and ingenious wise-spirited men". There are two reasons for his change of heart. First is that he was here comparing astrologers in general to Presbyterian ministers, whom he considered to be "proud" and against the spirit of God. The second reason has to do with Evans' own dabbling in astrology. Evans specifically picked himself out for praise among astrologers: "And that one Astrologer who wrote a little Book, called King Charls his Starre, hath clearly by Scripture confuted their annotation to the Bible." ³⁸⁸ He had written this book himself under a pseudonym, which had allowed the astrologer Evans to praise the inspired prophet Evans. As an astrologer, Evans also picked himself out of the ranks of inspired prophets for special praise.³⁸⁹ His entry into the realm of astrological science may have been an attempt to gain the credence of those who had given heed to astrology during the Civil War, and who were increasingly inclined to disregard inspired prophecy as lunacy.

In his 1655 pamphlet The Voice of the Iron Rod to the Lord Protector, Evans continued to comment upon the abuses of

³⁸⁸ Evans, The Euroclydon Winde, p. 82.

³⁸⁹ 4---- IS A'--z, (Arise Evans), King Charls his Starre (London: 1654), TT E 1482 (3). The reference to Evans as an inspired prophet runs as follows: "...you would be pleased (bth for your own and the common good) to bestow some time in pursuing of the book of that eminent saint and servant of God, Mr. Arise Evans, who hath publickely declared truths of God these twenty yeares....Deare Sirs, receive instruction, it will be for YOUR good: what and if some worldlings have been pleased to account the said Mr. Evans but a pseudo Prophet, I hope you do not so..." (pp. 43-44)

Cromwell's evil counsellors. The direct comparison between Cromwell and Charles I showed that Cromwell had fully taken over the power and place which rightfully belonged to Prince Charles. He was not willing to give up power to Christ's chosen leader, and it was well known what happened to those who stood in God's way. Evans reminded Cromwell that the basis of all governments was church government, and that his own rule was increasingly straying from the proper course. He also warned the Protector that the nation was getting tired of supporting his navy, army, and court.³⁹⁰ Evans had been informed by "discreet men of all parts in England" that if things did not improve there would be a massive general uprising. This knowledge had been confirmed through the study of scripture and by a series of visions.³⁹¹

According to Evans, Cromwell had been created for a higher purpose than tyranny, and could avoid this fate by returning Charles Stuart to England, thereby setting the nation on the road to redemption. He urged the Protector to heed the example of Alexander the Great, who had rewarded a vanquished enemy with the return of his nation. Alexander, though a heathen, had proven generous, heroic and virtuous. Cromwell, as a Christian, could do no less, and the higher purpose of his action would show up his true Christianity even more.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Arise Evans, The Voice of the Iron Rod to the Lord Protector (London: 1655), TT E 1474 (3), pp. A2, 3, 6.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁹² Ibid., pp. 7-9.

In 1655 Evans teamed with Isaac Pennington (1616-1679) to produce a short pamphlet entitled Mr. Evan's and Mr. Pennington's Prophetie....³⁹³ Pennington was the son of Isaac Pennington Sr. (c1587-1661), an Alderman of London and Presbyterian Divine, and the brother-in-law of William Penn. He experimented with various religious groups before becoming a Quaker in 1657. He was known for his "gift of expressing mystical insight", and was in trouble with the authorities in 1659-1660 for expressing his inspired views.³⁹⁴ Although this work is only 6 pages long, it is entirely made up of visions. These visions conform to the standard pattern and contain elements previously found in Evans' interpretation of John Farley's visions. Perhaps for this reason the pamphlet did not contain a gloss but rather presented the visions without commentary. It may have been that the association of images with Farley's vision sufficiently indicated the meanings of these revelations. It may also be that the pamphlet itself is incomplete, although the format and the ending argue against this.

This pamphlet presents two "confrontations" with Satan, which show Pennington's redeemed nature. In the first Pennington is met by a man riding one ass and leading another. He is thrown upon the second ass and led away to a place where "venemous

³⁹³ Arise Evans and Isaac Pennington, Mr. Evans and Mr. Pennington's Prophecies... (London: 1655), TT E 823 (6).

³⁹⁴ Biographical Dictionary, Vol. III, pp. 22-23. Pennington wrote a prophetic tract in 1650 entitled A Voyce Out of Thick Darkness.

Beasts" covered the ground and a sulphurous smell filled the air. The man led the asses into a pit which seemed to have no bottom, but which eventually opened into a room "of a very great vastness". Within this room were a large number of tormented souls "tossed up and down with forks of Iron" by demons. Pennington proved too strong to be thrown into this room, and so was bidden to depart by the man who had brought him. He spent two days and nights wandering the caverns without meeting anyone. Eventually he met an old man with a long beard who gave him an apple. When he bit into the apple he was "taken up" by a wild boar which carried him back to the place he had started. 395

After having this visionary experience Pennington had trouble sleeping, and in fact he fell into a waking dream. He felt his room pitching and rolling like a ship in a storm.³⁹⁶ His ship was destroyed on a rock, but he made it to shore by holding onto a piece of broken mast. Once on shore he travelled for two days and nights until he came to a large orchard in which the fruit only grew at the top of the trees. A voice told him to gather the fruit and wait; then he awoke.³⁹⁷ Once again we see Pennington as a redeemed soul. Spiritually he was too strong to be thrown into the pit with the souls of the damned. Both the old man with the apple, and the orchard suggest that Pennington

³⁹⁵ Evans and Pennington, Prophecies, pp. 2-3.

³⁹⁶ Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 38 n. 54. The voyage as spiritual journey was a common theme in seventeenth century religious discourse.

³⁹⁷ Evans and Pennington, pp. 2-3.

was worthy of re-entry into Eden. In his role of prophet he was also directed to gather the fruit of the lord (the true believers) to prepare for the Fifth Monarchy.

The second confrontation occurred "in Moorfields, upon the tenth of December 1654." He happened upon a man in white of whom he asked directions to Canaan. The man took him to a dark forest which was infested with snakes, bats and owls, and in which the trees were covered in glowworms, although they apparently cast no light. Pennington conversed with his companion and discovered that he was a miller by the name of Bunhil. Bunhil invited him for a drink, and they entered a cave where they were served ale from an old lamp. Pennington found the ale to be not to his liking: "[I]t had like to choak mee." He turned to blow his nose and noticed a company of hogs. He was told that they were the "herd from Gazaret" and was directed to kill one and eat it. He found this to be a curious suggestion:

With that, J mistrusting him, turned up his petticoat, which he had under a long robe he wore, and found his feet to be cloven, and his cods were made after the fashion of milkpails, then said a voice, this is the great dragon, bind him, and I took two yards of white yncle, and bound him to the earth, and a voice answered, Tis enough.³⁹⁸

Again, Pennington had triumphed over Satan, and in the process had bound the "great dragon". Pennington did not physically sense that Bunhil was not to be trusted, but was informed through his internal communion with the Spirit.

After this vision Pennington fell back to sleep, but was

³⁹⁸ Evans and Pennington, Prophecies, p. 4.

awakened by a man in a long black robe who went by the name of Trampington. He was bidden to follow the man, and the two moved through a narrow lane to a thick wood, "where the trees were hung with all sorts of weapons fitting for war."³⁹⁹ Upon reaching this tree Trampington grabbed a weapon and told Pennington to defend himself. Pennington took up a weapon, cut off his opponents leg and head, and was told by a voice that he had fought a good fight. A man in white appeared and began singing praises, and quickly disappeared, after which Pennington awoke.⁴⁰⁰

Pennington's first vision is of himself with a mattock in his hand, paving the road to paradise with precious stones. Upon travelling this path he found himself beset by "a multitude of men, women and children" who came against him with "Clubs, Canes, and Hobby-Horses". At the point when he thought his brains would be beaten out, he was rescued by a woman who imparted to him the "Secret of all Secrets, which I have always observed: this Secret was the whitening of the Spiritual Pearl". The woman told him of seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. The time of plenty was almost up, and people needed to "whiten" their spiritual pearls in order to sustain themselves through the upcoming seven years of famine. ⁴⁰¹

In the next revelation Pennington found himself in a ditch

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 1.

which was white as snow, with his "head was covered all over with salt". Salt was generally considered to have been a sign of spiritual redemption.⁴⁰² While he was still lying in the ditch a voice came to him which said: "[G]o and cry against this Nation: for Sin come out of her, Oh my people lest you partake of her Sins: and I heard another voice saying **Babylon is fallen, Babylon the great is fallen Amen Halleluiah.**" ⁴⁰³ Not only did this vision contain a representation of Pennington's own redemption, it also instructed him in his duties as a prophet. He was to "cry against this Nation", so that the people might be redeemed.

Pennington's next vision instructed him to "arise and denounce Judgement against this nation". He had been given a vision "too glorious for sinful flesh to behold", and his mission was to instruct others in the true ways of the spirit so that they could help in the achievement of his vision. He was lifted up by an angel who blew into his ear, and imparted a vision of what he thought was London, but was really only a map of the city. The angel pointed out all the "glorious structures" and "excellent beauties" and politicians which would "fall into the pit they had dug for others". Pennington then heard a loud clap of thunder and a voice which reassured him that these visions were true and that those who believed would be blessed. Another angel took a handful of crumbs and scattered them on the earth,

⁴⁰² Smith, Perfection Proclaimed, p. 90, n.55.

⁴⁰³ Evans and Pennington, Prophecies, p. 1.

at which point a young man with a gold crown appeared and

gathered the crums, and under his wing many thousand poor souls have suffered for conscience sake; and silence was then commanded, and behold I saw other Angels with sicles in their hands saying, behold, harvest is now at hand, and I was ravished with joy and awaked.⁴⁰⁴

The next vision begins with Pennington standing "awake in [his] own imagination neare Aldergate". Above the gate he noticed King James I riding on a dapple-grey horse. A voice asked him about the slow progress of the King's horse, which Pennington had at first thought to be standing still. He heard another voice which told him to look higher in the sky where he noticed a pair of white winged feet which "came down with such incredible swiftness like the ropes of Bel" and gently landed upon his head. He looked up and saw a young man

but could not feel my weight, and he said unto me stand sure for I wil not offend you, then the winds fel a blustering so strongly that the houses were shaken, and many fel to the ground, then the young man gathered these winds together and put them all into four bladders saying, I am your Master, and I have power ouer you, then there was a great calm⁴⁰⁵

After the young man had contained the winds a large number of women and children appeared, and jeered at them. The winds then broke loose and caused a great deal of destruction. "[I]t is enough." said the youth, "I came not to destroy more, for the Hittites and the Amorites are all rooted out". These winds can be taken for the Spirit, which destroyed all views contrary to it

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

(as the God of the Jews opposed the Hittites and Amorites). The analogy of "wind" and "Spirit" was common, and can even be found in political newsbooks.⁴⁰⁶ After destroying the crown he wore, the young man was carried on Pennington's shoulders to Foster-lane, where he had a new crown of incredible weight placed upon his head. Pennington donned a satin cap covered in pearls, which indicated his redemption and purity (the whitening of his spiritual pearl). The vision ends with Pennington coming into the knowledge that God's plans would be fulfilled: "blessed be my eyes that have seen this day, and my ears that have heard these sounds and my mother that bore me, because I now see the will of the Lord performed". At this point he awoke.⁴⁰⁷

In the next vision he found himself wandering a desert⁴⁰⁸ in which the air was filled with the cries of various wild beasts. Suddenly he found himself surrounded by a "multitude of people of all sorts". Upon approaching the crowd three rams appeared from a near-by woods and charged, trampling many in the crowd. Pennington climbed onto a large stump to avoid the rams, who then gathered around him and rubbed themselves against the bole. While still standing on his stump he heard a voice which said:

⁴⁰⁶ Mercurius Politicus, 1652, TT E 662, noted that the authorities "labour to hedge in the winde, to binde up the sweet influence of the Spirit, they will not suffer it to blow where it lists, because they know not where it comes, or whither it goes." (p. 1759) See also Cary, A Word in Season, pp. 4-5; Trapnel, Strange and Wonderfull Newes, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁰⁷ Evans and Pennington, Prophecies, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁸ Pennington's view of a spiritual desert compares with Trapnel's "fallow field" noted above.

"[F]eare not that thou sittest upon the Tree, thou hast been faithful in a little, I will make thee ruler over much, and being surprized and effected with sudden joy [he] started and awaked."⁴⁰⁹

The two remaining visions are quite short. In the first Pennington attended a hanging in St. James Park over which the ghost of King James I presided. He was rewarded for his diligence in spreading the word, and assured that the Fifth Monarchy was close at hand. The second vision starts with Pennington being informed of the need for hierarchical church government. Hierarchy was natural in heaven, and by extension, it was also natural on earth. Once again he was cast in the role of national redeemer. He used the white cloud of heaven to push back the black cloud of demons which had overcome the nation. The heavens themselves defeated a woman in scarlet (identified by Evans in John Farley's vision as the representative of Parliament). She had ripped the stars from their assigned places, but eventually the natural order prevailed, and the stars returned to their divinely ordained positions. The implication of this part of the vision is clear. If it is accepted that the scarlet woman represents Parliament, as is Evans' general characterisation, then her displacement of the stars is an analogy to what Parliament had done to Charles I and the House of Lords. The hierarchy of the heavens, as has been pointed out, was reflected in the hierarchy on earth. If one was accepted,

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

then the other, by necessity, needed to be accepted as well. Soon God would right the natural order, and bring in the Fifth Monarchy---a monarchy which by implication would be set up under the Stuarts.

Pennington's visions show the connections between "experience" and "prophecy" to good effect. His "conflicts" with Satan, and his personal triumphs over the Beast, show his own saved nature. As a redeemed soul Pennington had a duty to his "fellow creatures" to impart the word of God for the strengthening of the saved and the salvation of the un-redeemed. In his visions he was directed to "cry against this Nation", to declare the wishes of God and impart instructions on the true path to salvation. Redemption would follow from the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, which would in turn reconstitute the cosmic balance.

Arise Evans was a committed royalist. This commitment came from an understanding that the king was God's annointed representative, and that only a society governed by a king could find peace, security and order. "For there is but one Anointed on earth at one time", stated Evans, and "the People were Anointed as long as they continued their obedience to the King."⁴¹⁰ His attachment to the universal system which tied the

⁴¹⁰ Arise Evans, To the Most High and Mighty Prince Charles the II. Ey the Grace of God, KING of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc. An Epistle Written and humbly presented for His Majesties use, and Enlightening of the Nation. (London: Printed for R. Lownden and Simon Gape, 1660), pp. 49-50.

role of king to God was echoed in his belief that the Arminian church was the true church. It was the only church which had a properly constituted hierarchy; a hierarchy which mirrored the heavenly order. "Episcopacy is of God set in order....For God is the God of order, and not the author of confusion".⁴¹¹

In his 1660 pamphlet An Epistle he relates earlier visions which leave no doubt that he looked to the divine system for peace and order. On February 21, 1659, "after the secluded members sat in Parliament", Evans experienced a vision in which he "beheld that [his] head was cut off". He searched for his head, and upon finding it, wiped away the dirt and fitted it back onto his body. Evans felt that his body represented "the Nation or Parliament", and "specifically the secluded Members". He informed Parliament that his head symbolised "the King, and doubtless as I wiped my face and set up my head seeing a necessity of it, so shall you speedily set up King Charles."⁴¹²

Evans saw the death of Charles I as a necessary step on the road to national redemption. Charles I, like Christ, had died so that his blood would wash away the sins of the people. He had paid the blood price of the nation. The sacrifice of Charles I and the leadership of Charles II would ensure the redemption of the people. Christ would reign on earth, not physically, but in souls which accepted the natural order of monarchy. Evans

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p. 38. He made the same point in A Voice from Heaven, p. 22.

⁴¹² Evans, An Epistle, pp. 28-29.

commented upon current political events in order to show the manner in which they either followed or diverged from God's chosen path. His political ideology was formed from his deeply held religious convictions concerning the proper ordering of the universe.

Evans' involvement in the Royalist cause stems from the belief that the king was God's representative. His meeting with Charles II in 1660 indicates the depth of his belief in the spiritual power of kingship. Evans happened upon the King in St. James Park in the summer of 1660. He intercepted the king, and upon being introduced, was offered the monarch's hand. Instead of kissing Charles II's hand, Evans rubbed his nose on it. He hoped that by the king's touch he would be cured of a skin disease which had been spreading over his face "so that it was not only nauseous to view but very fetid of smell". His "fungous", "ulcerated", and "scabbed" nose burst open at the touch, and Evans declared that "the evil humours which did disfigure my face very much was gone." The king left Evans still on his knees thanking God for his cure.⁴¹³ As far as is known, this is the only reward that Evans received for over a decade of dedicated "political" work in the Royalist cause.

⁴¹³ Evans, An Epistle, p. 35; Hill, Change and Continuity, p. 76. Elias Ashmole saw Evans a few days later and confirmed that his face was cured. Evans himself claimed that "Neighbours knew me not by face" after his miraculous healing.

Conclusions

The restoration of Charles II in 1660 brought the era of prophecy to a close. Times had stabilized, and people did not need to resort to prophets in order to understand God's plans. Most sectarian groups curtailed their divine utterances; their messages were being increasingly ignored. Changes in the intellectual climate fuelled skepticism about the efficacy of prophecy. The newly formed Royal Society was dismissing all forms of prediction. The precedence which astrology had enjoyed during the Civil War, already eroding during the Interregnum, received a fatal blow when the Society refused to recognise it as a science.⁴¹⁴ One contemporary observer expressed the view that astrology was "a species of profane divination", and not a science.⁴¹⁵ The Society of Astrologers managed to limp through the Restoration, but died shortly thereafter.⁴¹⁶ Astrology's methods and tenets could not be reconciled with the new orthodoxy of scientific experimentation.⁴¹⁷ The new scientists were viewed by the religious community as "atheistic, subversive and dissenting".⁴¹⁸ Ironically it was they, and not the prophets,

⁴¹⁴ Patrick Curry, Prophecy and Power, pp. 45-91. See especially, pp. 59-60.

⁴¹⁵ Meric Causabon, Of Credulity and Incredulity, in things Natural, Civil, and Divine (1658), noted in Ibid., p. 49.

⁴¹⁶ Patrick Curry "The Astrologer's Feasts" History Today, Vol. 38, (April, 1988), pp. 17-22.

⁴¹⁷ Margaret 'Espinase "The Rise and Fall of Restoration Science." Past and Present No. 14, (November, 1958), pp. 71-89.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., p. 76.

who heralded a new era.

The new scientific spirit also influenced contemporary views of visionary prophecy. Divine inspiration was no longer considered a viable explanation for "prophetic" behaviour. Meric Causabon's "scientific" explanation of the natural causes of inspiration in Treatise on ENTHUSIASME (1654) is the best example of such work. New understandings of lunacy and madness helped to destroy people's belief in personal contact with the divine as well.⁴¹⁹ Stabler times allowed for the enacting and enforcing of government legislations which impinged upon sectarian prophetic utterance. As early as 1650 ordinances were beginning to appear which attempted to curb enthusiasm.⁴²⁰ Such decrees as the Quaker Act (1662) and the Conventicles Act (1664) prescribed fines and imprisonment for those who brought their private visions into the public sphere.⁴²¹ Before the turn of the century the sects themselves were finding claims of inspiration embarrassing.⁴²² Christopher Hill notes that "the key-note of upper class thinking after 1660 is opposition to 'fanaticism',

⁴¹⁹ MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam, passim.

⁴²⁰ Umphrey Lee, Historical Background, p. 99, n.2.

⁴²¹ Reay, Quakers, p. 105. The stable nature of post-Restoration period also meant that millennial movements gathered less of a following, and therefore presented less of a threat to order. See Christopher Hill's discussion of John Mason in Puritanism and Revolution, pp. 311-323.

⁴²² Barbour, The Quakers, pp. 234-235; Hill, "Popular Irreligion in the English Revolution." in Reay and McGregor, eds., Radical Religion, pp. 210-211; Reay, Quakers, pp. 104-106.

'enthusiasm', and to claims to inspiration".⁴²³

Inspired prophets helped to speed their own demise. Hill recognised that three Gods operated during the English Revolution. One was the God of established order. The second was also a God of order, but order based upon principles of justice, and not upon divine ordination. The third was the radical God which dwelt in the heart of all true believers.⁴²⁴ Inspired prophets drew upon the first of these Gods in their belief that there was a coherence in the transcendent and earthly realms. The third God allowed each prophet an individual understanding of the workings of the divine mind. The mixture of the traditional deity with the most radical helps to illustrate a society in transition. Prophets attempted to restore the balance of the universe, and secure God on his heavenly throne; however, the "God within" knew no hierarchy, and as a result God's messengers helped to push Him from His divine place. The notion of God in all people also made the role of prophet redundant. Presumably anyone could come to an understanding of God's wishes. Prophets, therefore, were not needed as intermediaries between heaven and earth. But these effects were not fully felt until after the Restoration.

During the Civil War and Interregnum, troubled times had brought unprecedented resort to, and belief in, prophecy. Millenarian and apocalyptic ideas formed the heart of most

⁴²³ Hill, "God and the English Revolution", p. 26.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., pp. 19-23.

prophetic understandings in a period which was seen as playing out the final phases of the events foretold in the biblical books of Daniel and Revelations. The atmosphere of confusion and fear, and the greater freedom which existed prior to 1660, had allowed for what Christopher Hill has described as a "new profession of prophets."⁴²⁵ Certainly the unique blend of intellectual ideas, highly volatile times, and increasing radicalisation in religion resulted in a type of inspired prophecy which could not have been generated at another time.

The "experiences" of the prophets studied shows that they trusted in their own inspiration. They had a religious obligation to comment upon the problems of the time, and needed to inform the nation of God's desires concerning their present troubles. Phyllis Mack has shown how the worries of female prophets unconsciously became the subject of their prophecies. The need to understand the unsettling political and social events going on around them produced the same internalization in all prophets of this period. Seventeenth century prophets took the same role as their biblical forerunners in pointing out the cosmic consequences of earthly events. The prophet Ezekiel warned the people of Jerusalem that their wicked activities would lead to God's wrath and their ultimate destruction.⁴²⁶ Isaiah warned the rulers of Judah that they would be destroyed for

⁴²⁵ Hill, World Turned Upside Down, p. 73.

⁴²⁶ Ezekiel, 1-25.

acting contrary to the wishes of God.⁴²⁷ Amos gave similar warnings to the people and rulers of Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, and Moab.⁴²⁸ Jonah and Nahum spoke to the city of Ninevah as God's messengers, and through the prophet Micah, God denounced the rulers of Israel.⁴²⁹

The redemptive call can be seen in the works of seventeenth century prophets, and all utterances applied to contemporary circumstances. It was the job of the prophet to point out the consequences of present actions on God's plan for the nation. The futures which they foresaw were only possible futures (except the ultimate millennium), and could be changed by individual or group effort. Eleanor Davis saw Charles I as an impediment to national salvation. He was the Beast's servant, who tried to bind true religion to false worship. The King needed to die for England to realise the Kingdom of Heaven. His downfall heralded the collapse of the old divine order, and the beginnings of the final kingdom. Elizabeth Poole argued that the chaos which engulfed England was a result of Charles I's actions, but that both the King and the nation could find peace if they communed with their in-dwelling Spirit. The king was the representative of God, and he needed to live if the troubled times were to end. Parliament had neither the right nor the authority to punish him. George Foster indicated God's intention to level pride, greed,

⁴²⁷ Isaiah, 3:2-6, 6:13-15.

⁴²⁸ Amos, 1:3-5, 6-9, 9-10, 13-15.

⁴²⁹ Jonah, passim.; Nahum, passim.; Micah, 1-25.

and ambition. This levelling would destroy self-interest and foster lasting peace. All changes would result from an acceptance of an internal God. Anna Trapnel felt Parliament was an ungodly instrument of Antichrist. Cromwell was damned because he had usurped Christ's throne. Parliament had suffered its rightful destruction, but Cromwell could be redeemed by returning his "crown" to Christ. After the execution of the king, Elinor Channel's inner voice instructed her to direct the nation to "tie the knots of peace" by establishing the true Gospel. Arise Evans saw Charles I's death as necessary, believing the king was sacrificed so that his blood could wash away national sin. Parliament had been given control as a punishment for the transgressions of the nation. For Evans, Cromwell impeded the second coming by taking the throne in the place of Charles II, Christ's true earthly representative. In these revelations, political events were measured by their religious implications and cosmic results.

The idea that inspired prophecy was a safe front for spreading of dangerous views does not hold up in the face of the evidence. The close ties which existed in this period between religion and politics make it unlikely that "religiously" presented ideas would be less dangerous to those spreading them than concepts introduced in a blatantly "political" manner. Religious differences were met with intolerance and opposition equally as vicious as that which greeted political dissent. Prophecy proved ineffective as a safe haven for presenting

political ideas. For prophecy to be effective as a shield, the message the prophet presented needed to be acceptable to those in power. If it was not to their liking, the authorities suppressed individual prophets. Faced by powerful opposition and left to their own resources, prophets did not fare well.⁴³⁰ Throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, would-be prophets had suffered fines, imprisonment, torture and death for presenting their divine truths. The Elizabethan prophet William Hacket was drawn and quartered in 1591 for his millennial ideas.⁴³¹ The prophets of the mid-seventeenth century were also ill-treated. Eleanor Davis spent a good deal of the 1630's confined to either Bedlam or Bridewell. She was assessed a massive fine for her predictions, and certainly had to deal with a great deal of enmity from those whom her prophecies ill-affected. George Foster endured the ill-treatment of the Earl of Essex's guard. Elinor Channel was persecuted and reviled by the London crowds when she attempted to impart her message. Anna Trapnel spent time in numerous prisons in London and the south-west of England. She was abused both verbally and in written form. Arise Evans' early prophecies landed him in Bridewell and Bedlam. He fared somewhat better than most throughout the Interregnum, although he still feared the "wolves of the times". All prophets suffered disparagement at the hands of authorities

⁴³⁰ Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", pp. 42-46.

⁴³¹ Hill, Puritanism and Revolution, p. 315; Thomas, RDM, pp. 133-134.

and their supporters. It seems likely that the prophet's political ideas stemmed from their religious convictions, and that these beliefs ran deep and true, and "ravished" their souls as they frequently asserted.

Inspired prophecy was a vehicle through which seventeenth century English people attempted to understand the desires of God. Prophets called people to redemption, and their individual contact with the divine mind gave them different concepts of the path to be followed to achieve salvation. Prophecy grew out of a mixture of tradition and innovation which in the end helped to destroy it. Inspired prophets were convinced of the truth of their path. This conviction meant that they had no choice but to make this truth known to the world, especially in such unstable times. The troubled nature of mid-seventeenth century society led to an extension of the personally redemptive "experience" beyond the individual, and beyond his or her "fellow creatures" to the nation as a whole. Combined with this was a radicalisation of more mainstream Puritan ideas of providence. Experience and providence produced a unique form of religious expression. Prophets used this idiom to call the people of England to redemption for their own sakes; however, as people increasingly ignored it, prophecy began to turn inward. By the mid-1660's "experience" had, for the most part, become a private thing, shared not as redemptive instruction with the un-converted nation, but as spiritual confirmation with the like-minded.

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